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STUDIES IN THE
B E N E D I C T E

COMPILED BY

ALICIA BAYNE

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord

LONDON
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY

1886

Dedication.

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND
EDWARD HAROLD,
LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,
THIS VOLUME WAS DEDICATED

(BY PERMISSION)

BY

ALICIA BAYNE,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
A FRIENDSHIP OF MANY YEARS.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THERE are already two well-known works upon the *Benedicite*, but it seemed to the compiler of this little volume that there was room for yet another. Her desire was to bring together passages illustrating the Song of the Three Children from various sources, such as might bring out its deep meaning and beauty. She only claims to have put together a mosaic, which might be described in the words of Montaigne: 'I have made only a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them.' Death prevented her manuscript from receiving the final supervision by her who had devoted much time and thought to gathering together the extracts of which it is composed. No

one can be better aware of the disadvantages from which it has suffered than the editor. It is offered to the general reader, in the hope that many may find an interest in the pages which it was a labour of love to the compiler to collect and put in order, and she found in such studies a solace to her last years.

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INTRODUCTION.

It may be well, before considering the Hymn of Praise which forms the subject of these 'studies,' to compare the two rival cities of Jerusalem, emphatically called 'The City of God,' and Babylon, termed by its proudest monarch 'the Great.'

There are so many allusions in the Psalms to the aspect of the 'holy city,' that we are enabled to picture it as it appeared to the eyes of the Israelites, and was engraven on their hearts when they were carried into captivity. 'Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself,' they sang; 'God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge'; 'Walk about Sion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof'; 'Her foundations are upon the holy hills'; 'The Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob'; 'The hills stand about Jerusalem'; 'Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God'—descriptions bearing a twofold character, for the earthly and spiritual are both contained in them, and the earthly Jerusalem was but the type of the heavenly city.

'This world,' says an old divine, 'is but as a quarry, where the living stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem are

cut and moulded.' The chief glory of Jerusalem consisted in its being the casket which held the Temple built by Solomon for the glory of God, as he had been charged to do by his father David, who had gathered together for that purpose gold from Arabia, silver, brass, onyx, precious stones, and marble in abundance, for he had said, 'The house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries.' Recollecting David's earnest desire to raise 'a habitation for the Lord,' this seems only what we should expect, but the Books of Kings assign both plan and preparation to Solomon.

For seven years the mighty work went on—

'No hammers fell, no ponderous axes rang,
Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprang.'

'In this respect,' says Bishop Wordsworth, 'the Temple was a figure of the Church. . . . The work of the Spirit is not by violent emotion, but by silent influence.' 'God's work should be done with much care and little noise. Clamour and violence hinder the work of God, but never further it,' is the comment of Matthew Henry. To the Jews it did not seem right that iron, which is used to destroy life, should be employed about the altar of God. Some of the stones of the first Temple remain to this day imbedded in the ancient wall of Jerusalem, and astonish all who see them by their enormous size and the apparent impossibility of lifting them, for the largest of them weighs over one hundred tons, and, as far as we know, machinery was not then used to raise them. The marvel is only to be

explained, by the fact that human labour was super-abundant. It is believed that the palace built in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar was erected in fifteen days !

The site of the Temple was Mount Moriah, where once had been the threshing-floor of Araunah, the royal Jebusite, and where Abraham had prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. There, when the Temple was completed, Solomon assembled all Israel ; and one procession 'came from the lofty height of Gibeon, bearing with it the relics of the old pastoral worship, now to be disused for ever,' while a second brought from the tent 'erected by David on Mount Zion' the ark of acacia wood, while king and people offered 'sheep and oxen that could not be numbered.' The priests carried the ark, containing now only the two tables of stone which Moses had placed there at Horeb, to the Most Holy Place, divided from the rest of the Temple by folding-doors of oleaster wood ; and a heavy veil or curtain, suspended on chains of gold, and composed of blue, purple, and crimson on a ground of fine white linen, hung outside the doors. With this great event is for ever connected the magnificent Psalm, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates,' a prophecy of a yet greater day. 'The reverence thus shown for their sanctuary,' observes Dr. Geikie, 'displayed itself rather by the richness of the material so freely expended on it than in form or proportion. In size the Temple could not compare with the great religious buildings of contemporary heathen nations, nor even with a fine cathedral. But size alone has little to do with the

importance either of a building or a country. The Temple emphatically spoke of a religion requiring personal holiness, acknowledging only one God, and that a holy God. Because God was holy, man must be holy too.'

'Other nations thought of God as Beauty, some as Strength, some as Wisdom, but the Israelites alone recognised Him as Holy, and knew that to fall short of His commands was sin.'¹ The Jews found this law too strict for them, and they fell away to idols which required no righteousness. Vainly their prophets foretold the desolation of their beloved city if they forgot its God. 'Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord,' and by Nebuchadnezzar was the prophecy unconsciously fulfilled. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, was deposed, and, as one version of his fate related, his corpse was thrown out to waste outside the walls of his royal city, exposed to the sun by day and the frost by night, while, says a gloomy legend, on the skin of the corpse 'there appeared in Hebrew characters the name of the demon Codonazer, to whom he had sold himself.' Three months later his son was also deposed, and then came the Captivity, which must have fallen on the Chosen People with a crushing sense of despair such as we can hardly conceive. Jerusalem was pillaged, and 'from the top of Lebanon, from the heights of Bashan, from the ridges of Abarim the widowed country shrieked aloud as she saw the train of her captive king and nobles disappearing in the distant east.' What a

¹ Bramston, *Judea and her Rulers*.

sad march it must have been of these captives, under the blue unchanging sky and dazzling radiance of the sun by day, and under the 'starry cope of heaven by night'!

From the sculptures found on interior walls at Kony-njik, we may picture to ourselves the triumphal march of an Eastern conqueror. Women and children are on foot, or on asses, or in carts drawn by oxen. Other carts and wagons carry furniture and metal vessels, spears and swords. Sheep, oxen, mules, camels, and goats are among the spoil. It was, and is, the custom in the East that after a victory two scribes note down on rolls of leather the number of the slain, and of the sheep and cattle driven off. These numbers were then inscribed in cuneiform characters on the palace walls, where to this day the tale of Oriental conquest may be read.

There is none known to exist of the taking of Jerusalem, but doubtless it ran much as others do:—'The goods I carried off . . . the palaces I dug up. I conquered the city of . . . the royal side . . . (The Air God, the Sun God.) The citadel and the walls I have built. The men and women folk belonging to them I carried off. The cavalry quarters I destroyed. Three hundred and eight horses I carried off. Over 8000 oxen, 5538 sheep.'

The monarch himself appears in his chariot, surrounded by his guards, seated, or else standing erect, holding a bow in the left hand, and raising the right in token of triumph. A charioteer accompanies him, and

an attendant bears an open umbrella, from which falls a long curtain. The chariot is drawn by two horses richly decked with tassels and bells; archers and spearmen precede it.

In the case of the Israelitish captives, it is probable that they were led by the shortest route to Babylon. 'High-roads and causeways, which were kept carefully in repair across the desert, united Syria and Palestine with Babylonia; others branched off to Tadmor (Palmyra). Walled cities served as resting-places, and wells at regular intervals gave an abundant supply of water during the hottest season of the year.'

Assyria was now divided into three portions—Lydia, Media, and Chaldea or Babylonia. This last was a province by itself. The vast plain which composed it lay between the Tigris and Euphrates, and was known in the Old Testament as Aram and Shinar, but to the Greeks as Mesopotamia. Nineveh was built on the former, Babylon—the golden city, as Isaiah calls it—on the latter stream.

The surrounding country was then a fertile garden, depending on a gigantic system of irrigation, which has no parallel in anything found in the world at the present day. Now this vast plain is not only uncultivated, but for the most part incapable of cultivation. A large portion has been overflowed by the rivers, and converted into a swamp, while the rest is absolutely barren. Thus is fulfilled what Isaiah foretold—it is 'a desert of the sea.' At the time of the Captivity the corn-land was so fertile that it is said to have yielded two and

three hundredfold. Rabshakeh described this district as 'a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive and of honey.' Willows and poplars bordered the rivers, date-palms lifted their lofty heads, but other trees there were none. The cedars of Lebanon, the terebinths, the teil-tree, familiar to the eye of the captives, were all lacking ; and strangely new and undreamed of must have been the great city whither they were bound—that Babel, whose name reminded them that 'the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth,' but which may mean not only 'to confound,' but also 'Gate,' a meaning found also in Babelmandeb. At first the Golden City was a mere village built of sun-dried bricks, for no stone exists in this wide district ; and that so magnificent a city should have been constructed under such difficulties can only be accounted for, as Grote well remarks, 'by unbounded command of naked human strength,' combined, we may add, with audacious genius. Its massive walls, according to Herodotus, rose nearly to a height equalling that of the top of St. Paul's Cathedral ; but a more probable measurement is between eighty and ninety feet high, and about thirty wide. Between every two of its hundred gates rose watch-towers, ten feet higher than the walls, except on the western side, where impassable marshes were deemed a sufficient defence. Silver coins have been found at Babylon stamped with a wall thickly studded with towers and gates, probably representing the great city in her prime.

Among the heaps of ruins to which she is now reduced a short column of black basalt has been found, on which is graven two inscriptions that throw light on many matters connected with her history. It is divided into ten columns, containing 617 lines, each line forming part of some sentence, often so terse as to be somewhat obscure. They refer mainly to the construction of temples, palaces, and other public buildings, and are interesting both as records of the piety of the sovereigns of Babylon, and as affording numerous topographical notices of the great city :—

‘Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon, glorious Prince, adorer of the lofty one, the exalted, the possessor of intelligence ; firm, not to be destroyed ; exalted chief, Lord of peace, the valiant son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, am I.

‘The great walls of Babylon I built, which Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, had commenced, but not completed their beauty.

‘The walls of the fortress of Babylon, its defence in war, I raised, and the circuit of the city of Babylon. The fortresses I skillfully strengthened.

‘The walls of Babylon, whose banner (*sic*) is invincible, as a high fortress by the ford of the rising sun, I carried round Babylon.’

Major Rennel estimates these walls as extending over thirty-four miles—eight and a half on each side. They were built of large bricks made from the alluvial soil, mixed with grass and straw, dried either in the sun or in a furnace, and cemented with hot bitumen, the clay being probably taken from the moats filled with water beneath the walls. There is a Babylonian brick in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. Its measurements are $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches \times $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches \times $2\frac{1}{4}$ thick, and it has an in-

scription in cuneiform characters, which, by some strange oversight, has never been translated. If the name of Nebuchadrezzar is not there, it would be a great curiosity, showing it to have formed a part of the older buildings, but on by far the greater number of bricks found in and around Babylon the name of this mighty builder is impressed. Like Thebes, Babylon had a hundred gates, all of great size and strength, and of solid brass, or rather bronze. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, and it is doubtful if this latter metal were known to the ancients. Copper and tin make bronze, and we know that tin was used by them, therefore what is called brass was probably really bronze, or else copper. The inscription already quoted says—

‘The great gates, whose walls I constructed, with pinewoods and coverings of copper I overlaid them, to keep off enemies from the front of the wall of unconquered Babylon.’

From the same source we learn the names of some of these gates. The ‘gate of the deep’ was next the Euphrates, near the great temple of Merodach or Bel; the ‘gate Beautiful,’ the ‘gate of the Sunrise,’ the ‘Water-gate,’ the ‘King’s gate,’ the ‘gate of the Mighty God of the West.’ These gates and walls were intrusted to the care of a guardian.

Within, the city was divided into twenty-five grand streets, which extended quite across it from gate to gate, intersecting one another, and thus forming 626 squares.

These vast squares were laid out as corn-fields and orchards, palm-groves and gardens. ‘Within the walls

of Babylon,' wrote Quintus Curtius, 'there was space enough to cultivate corn for the sustenance of the whole population in case of siege;' and probably, as at Nineveh, there was much cattle in the fields.

The houses were not adjoining, but separate, and were about three or four stories in height, rising in terraces, so that each of the upper stories receded from the one below it.

They were adorned with the greatest magnificence. The Euphrates—flowing from north to south, 600 feet wide and 15 deep—divided the city into two parts, connected near the centre by a singular roofed bridge. On each side of the river was a quay, and in the later days of Babylon these quays were guarded by walls, pierced by small brazen gates, whence steps led down to the water—gates open in the day-time that passengers might be ferried across, but closed at night. Dean Milman has given us a picture of the Euphrates flowing through this wonderful city :—

‘Thou river,
That flowest exulting in thy proud approach
To Babylon, beneath whose shadowy walls,
And brazen gates, and gilded palaces,
And groves that gleam with marble obelisks,
Thy azure bosom shall repose, with lights
Fretted and chequered like the starry heavens.’

At either end of the bridge were two royal palaces, commanding a view of the whole city, and connected by a tunnel under the bed of the river. The descriptions of Herodotus lead us to suppose that Babylon was built on the same general plan as Nineveh, on

whose fall Babylon rose to the proud position of capital of the Eastern world. As in Nineveh, the temples and palaces were raised on lofty platforms of brickwork, often in fortified enclosures, capable of resisting a protracted siege. Mingled with these were the dwellings of the common people, palm-groves, orchards, gardens, and plots of corn-land. Of what was the great temple of Belus which Nebuchadnezzar built, only a high, oblong mass of ruins remains, with his name legible on the bricks of a few feet of wall. Upon another mass of ruins stands a gigantic lion of black basalt, standing over a prostrate figure. The mound is covered with shattered bricks and fragments of pale yellow walls, and 'between the broken walls and the black lion stands a single tamarisk-tree, whose presence among the ruins impresses the Arabs so much that they declare it to be a tree of a peculiar species, never met with elsewhere, and look upon it as a relic from the gardens of the ancient city. At the foot of the wall some slabs of stone have been found graven with the inscription, "This is the great palace of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who walked in the worship of the gods Nebo and Merodach, his lords."'

Nine miles from this ancient city rises a vast pile, far the most conspicuous of all these mighty ruins. It was long held to be the temple of Bel, but inscriptions on the clay cylinders found in its precincts show it to have been really dedicated to another god. It consisted of eight square colossal towers, rising one above another, and gradually decreasing in breadth. Seven

were of different colours—gold for the sun, silver for the moon, orange for Jupiter, for Venus primrose, for Mercury blue, while Saturn's was black, perhaps in allusion to his distance from the sun. I cannot forbear quoting the ingenious suggestion of James Nasmyth as to the origin of the pyramidal form in buildings connected with religion. 'On many occasions,' he writes, 'while beholding the sublime effects of the sun's rays streaming down on the earth through openings in the clouds near the horizon, I have been forcibly impressed with the analogy they appear to suggest as to the form of the Pyramid, while the single vertical ray suggests that of the Obelisk.'

'In following up this subject, I was fortunate enough to find many examples of this in the Egyptian Collection in the Louvre, at Paris; especially in small pyramids, which were probably the objects of household worship.'

'In one case I found a small pyramid, on the upper part of which appeared the disc of the sun, with pyramidal rays descending from it on to figures in the Egyptian attitude of adoration. This consists in the hands being held up before the eyes—an attitude expressive of the brightness of the object adored. It is associated with the brightness of the sun, and it still survives in the *salaam*, which expresses profound reverence and respect among Eastern nations. It also survives in the disc of the sun, which has for ages been placed like a halo behind the heads of sacred and exalted personages, as may be seen in Eastern and early paintings.'

This was the prayer, if prayer it may be called, of the great king when he had completed this temple, which was named Bix Saggata. How different was it from the consecration prayer of King Solomon!—

‘For thy glory, O exalted Merodach, a house have I made. May its greatness advance! May its fulness increase! In its midst abundance may it acquire! May its memorials be augmented! May it receive within itself the abundant tribute of the kings of nations and of all peoples.’

Almost as magnificent was the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. We quote the excellent description in Miss Keary’s *Nations Around*. ‘It is described by ancient writers as having been entirely covered outside with paintings of hunting and battle scenes, interspersed with inscriptions written in blue letters on white enamelled ground; and the numerous fragments of glazed tiles, painted in rich colours, with trees, flowers, and animals, that cover the heap of ruins where the palace once stood, prove the correctness of their account. The smaller ancient palace repaired by Nebuchadnezzar and the houses of the nobility . . . were no doubt ornamented in a similar fashion. Somewhere in the royal quarter of the city stood the celebrated hanging gardens erected by Nebuchadnezzar to gratify his Median queen, who, coming from a mountainous country, could take no pleasure in the monotonous scenery round her new home. Here plantations of trees, shrubs, and rare flowers flourished high up in the air, raised from the ground by successive tiers of lofty arches, ponderous enough to sustain the weight

of earth in which they grew. The river, running through the centre of the city, . . . must have greatly added to its beauty, by giving back a second series of rainbow-hued walls and fantastic gardens to the gaze of those who promenaded along the tops of the low, broad walls, which Herodotus says flanked it on either side ; and besides the river, there was an immense lake, constructed by Nebuchadnezzar, in the neighbourhood of his two palaces, which served as another looking-glass for the wonders of the place to repeat themselves in.'

Among the buildings of Babylon was a royal library, which owed its origin to Sargon, one of the most celebrated kings of Babylonia, who was father of Sennacherib, and lived B.C. 722. The reader had but to write down the number of the tablet (made of clay, terra-cotta, or alabaster), and it was handed to him by the librarian. Similar tablets have been found at Nineveh, measuring from one to nine inches, and inscribed with minute cuneiform characters, which record royal decrees and historical events, some reaching as far back as thirty centuries before the Christian era. There are about 200 specimens in the British Museum. They are mostly dated from particular events. Three examples of this dating are to be found in Isaiah. Some few are dated from years of an era. The literature which they disclose in many respects resembles our own, except in the quality of compression. They record sales and loans, and other matters of business ; lists of animals, birds, and

minerals; military records, such as the Egyptian campaign of Esarhaddon; the history of Sargon and his son, hunting texts, advice to kings, natural history, hymns and sacred poetry; prayers against eclipses and witchcraft; omens, celestial and terrestrial. We may remember that Nebuchadnezzar consulted the omens before starting on an expedition (Ezek. xxi. 21, 22), and we know how earnestly both astrology and astronomy were studied by the Babylonian sages. On the seventh story of the great temple already described there was an apartment fitted up for taking astronomical observations.

Such was the city on which the weary eyes of the Israelitish captives rested.

Its king was worthy of it. Nabu-kuduri-ursur, as his name is written in the inscriptions, stands a great, distinct, magnificent figure among the crowd of Assyrian kings whom we know as mere names, with little or no personality. He is 'the head of gold,' 'the tree which reached to heaven,' the last conqueror among the primeval monarchies, as Nimrod had been the first, the lord of the then known historical world, from Greece to India, insolent in his unbridled power, yet capable of great tenderness and devotion, worshipping his own Merodach, whom he calls 'the great lord, the senior of the gods, the most ancient,' yet bowing before the God of his Israelite captives, who now in a strange land saw the vessels of the Temple presented as an offering to Bel, and the spoils of their city brought into Babylon to grace

the triumphant entry of the great conqueror. Doubtless they recalled that bitter prophecy of Isaiah to King Hezekiah, when the Babylonian ambassadors had brought their message of congratulation, and beheld the treasures of his house. Captives in a strange land ! Well may our Litany include a petition ‘for all prisoners and captives.’ To remember freedom in slavery, our native land in exile, happiness in sorrow, are among the bitterest of griefs, and has been the subject of pathetic verse from earliest times, but no lament has equalled that Psalm which tells how the Israelites sat and wept by the rivers of Babylon, remembering Sion. ‘What an inexpressible pathos,’ says Bishop Horne, ‘is there in these few words ! How do they at once transport us to Babylon, and place before our eyes the mournful situation of the Israelitish captives ! Driven from their native country, stripped of every comfort and convenience, in a strange land, among idolaters, wearied and broken-hearted, they sit in silence by those hostile waters. Then the pleasant banks of Jordan present themselves to their imaginations, the towers of Salem rise to view, and the sad remembrance of much-loved Zion causes tears to run down their cheeks : “We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.”

‘The additional circumstance which the divine painter hath here thrown into his piece is, to the last degree, just and striking. It was not enough to represent the Hebrew captives weeping on the banks of the Euphrates at the remembrance of Zion, but

upon looking up, we behold their harps unstrung, and pendent on the willows that grew there. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

'These words were not given in answer to their enemies, but were the utterance of the Jews among themselves—they felt that their songs were too sacred to be sung before idolaters. Contrary, perhaps, to their natural anticipations, the exiles were well treated: "Yea, He made all those that led them away captive to pity them."'

They were permitted to live by themselves, and to keep their own religion, as far as they could do so when deprived of their Temple. Certain of the children of Israel, 'in whom there was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science,' were selected to dwell in the royal palace, in order that they might be taught the language and learning of the Chaldeans. This selection was in accordance with a belief which still exists among Orientals, that a superior mind cannot inhabit an inferior body.

Among them were three youths of noble race, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, whose names were changed, according to Assyrian custom when foreigners entered the king's service, into others containing, as far as they can be determined, a religious element. Like the Hebrew names which they replaced, they are full of a sacred if heathen poetry. The name of their boy friend and companion, Daniel, was also changed, and

at the Assyrian court he was known as Belteshazzar. Daniel and Hananiah had dwelt in courts before now, for they were descended from Hezekiah, and therefore of royal race ; and the other two were also either of royal lineage, or belonging to distinguished families. It is very remarkable how steadfastly these boys—Daniel was but fourteen years of age—clung to their faith, and set themselves steadfastly to serve God amid the temptations and misfortunes of captivity. Chosen to be prepared ‘to stand in the king’s palace,’ a ‘daily provision’ of food and wine was appointed them—probably of wheaten bread, meats of various kinds, fruit, fish, game, and imported wine, such as would be supplied to all his courtiers at the king’s cost. But it seems likely that this royal provision was regarded as a sacrificial offering, and that to partake of it would have been to participate in idolatry ; and therefore Daniel, in the name of himself and his friends, requested that they might merely eat pulse and water—a greater self-denial in that luxurious court than perhaps at first sight may appear. Reluctantly the request was granted ; Daniel had won, like Joseph, favour and tender love ; but if this abstinence made them ‘worse liking’ than those of the other captives, their guardian, not they, would suffer. At the end of ten days he was fully reassured, and soon he found, too, that ‘God gave these four children knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.’ Doubtless they too, like Daniel, prayed constantly, ‘looking,’ as the pathetic narrative says, ‘towards Jerusalem.’ A portion of one of his prayers is among the opening

sentences in our Liturgy. Three years later the four were brought before the king, the great conqueror, the great builder, the great genius—Alexander and Napoleon, as it were, in one. Glad at heart must Melzar their guardian have been when among the youths brought before him Nebuchadnezzar found none like Daniel and his three friends. How long the three remained at court we do not know, but seventy years later, when Cyrus conquered the Golden City, Daniel was still there, and lived to see Jerusalem once more rebuilt, as Jeremiah had prophesied she should be, when Nebuchadnezzar laid his heavy hand upon her. Two years after Nebuchadnezzar reigned alone—he had previously been associated with his father Nabopolassar,—a Divine revelation was vouchsafed him in a dream, forgotten by him as he woke, but haunting and harassing him until, in his anger that his astrologers could not recall it to him, he pronounced a sweeping sentence of destruction upon ‘all the wise men of Babylon,’ in which Daniel and his friends were involved. Evidently they had not been consulted, for Daniel appears astonished and perplexed by the decree; and when he understood the cause, he calmly asked for a little time to be given, promising that in that case he would tell both what the dream had been and its interpretation. Daniel was a man both of action and of prayer. He next called his friends, and begged them to ‘desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret,’ and probably himself prayed all night long—for it was no dream which answered his prayers,

but an awful vision—a gigantic statue, which presently was overthrown, broken, ground to powder, while a great mountain took its place, and filled the earth. Full of gratitude and awe, Daniel exclaimed, ‘Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever : for wisdom and might are His : He revealeth the deep and secret things : He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him.’

Arioch, whose mission it had been to put the sages of Babylon to death, hastened to bring Daniel before the king, who instantly recognised the vision now described to him, listened awestruck to the explanation given by the young seer, and rewarded him by making him ‘ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.’ In the hour of his prosperity Daniel remembered his friends, and obtained high posts of honour for all three. After the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar’s career was from victory to victory. Tyre fell, after a long and desperate resistance ; Egypt lay prostrate at his feet ; and the spoils of Thebes, Memphis, and Tyre were carried to Babylon. The golden image of the plain of Dura was probably erected after one of these campaigns. It has been suggested that this idol was meant as a representation of the statue of his dream ; but it would seem more probable that he was incited to set it up by the jealous Babylonian nobles plotting the disgrace and destruction of the three Hebrew governors, at whom the menace in the proclamation evidently points, for the idolatrous Baby-

lonians could have needed no threat to induce them to worship the 'brazen image.' According to the Babylonian inscriptions in the British Museum, there were three places called Dûra in Babylonia; and one was close to the city. A mound south-east of the town, however, bears the name of Dowair, and may be the Dura of the narrative, and here the pedestal of a colossal statue has been found.

The image set up by Nebuchadnezzar was colossal, its dimensions corresponding as nearly as possible to those of the gigantic bronze statue raised in honour of St. Charles Borromeo on the shore of Lago Maggiore. It was probably a sitting figure, on a huge pedestal, coated with gold—perhaps part of the spoil of Tyre. It may very possibly be to this very image that an inscription refers, which runs thus :—

'The chief of the gods, the Prince Merodach, whose fashion the former prince had fashioned in silver, with bright gold accurately weighed out, I overlaid.'

Let us now fancy ourselves on the plain of Dura. How striking must have been the scene! The golden statue glittering in the sunshine, beneath the deep blue sky, seen far and wide over the level plain, where crowds of worshippers were gathered! We are expressly told that all the Crown officers were there; and among them necessarily were Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael; and no doubt hundreds of other Hebrews, whose hearts must have been full of anxious expectation. Daniel, apparently, was for some unexplained cause absent. All the crowd being assembled, a

herald's voice proclaimed the royal decree, that, when the sound of the various instruments should be heard, every one should fall down and worship the mighty idol, or in that same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Burning was a common punishment among the Assyrians.

‘Saul Mugina, my rebellious brother, who made war with me, in the fierce burning fire they threw him’

says an inscription ; and another runs—

‘Dunann, in Nineveh, in a furnace they placed him, and consumed him entirely.’

Probably Nebuchadnezzar was not more cruel than other Assyrian kings, nor more despotic and imperious, and it is not wonderful that his wrath was great when, before the vast assembly gathered at his command on the plain of Dura, containing, no doubt, representatives from east and west, north and south, Greek and Mede, Phœnician and Assyrian, Hebrew and Arab, he saw himself defied by three captives whom he had loaded with favours. And to them the temptation to yield must have been great. ‘What matter, amid that crowd? They owed gratitude to the king ; certain death was before them if they disobeyed ; and their refusal might bring destruction on the Hebrew captives in the whole province.’ Assuredly, had they been satisfied to be, as too many are, merely ‘no worse than their neighbours,’ they would have followed a multitude to do evil. But they were not. Challenged by the Chaldean

informers, evidently men of rank, and summoned by the monarch to obey his command, they answered: 'Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' After this there was neither hope nor delay, and the furnace was heated one seven times more than it was wont to be.

From this source of punishment being at hand, we may infer that it had been used either for melting the gold of which the image was made, or for burning the enamelled bricks which were being made for the buildings in the city. The heat being increased sevenfold may have had a typical meaning, seven being a sacred number with the Chaldeans as well as the Hebrews. This pause must have tried the faith and courage of the three martyrs, and we may be sure that they sought for strength in prayer. Then at the king's command 'the most mighty men that were in his army' bound the three, and cast them amid the flames, feeding the fire, says the account in the Apocrypha, with such abundant fuel that 'the flame streamed forth above the furnace forty and nine cubits, and it passed through, and burned those Chaldeans it found about the furnace. But the Angel of the Lord came down, . . . and smote the flame, . . . and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind.'

We are forcibly reminded by these words of the

Arabic legend of the deliverance of Abraham from the furnace into which Nimrod is traditionally reported to have thrown him.

‘At the same instant when Abraham was thrown into the burning furnace, heaven with all its angels, and earth with all its creatures, cried as with one voice, “God of Abraham, Thy friend, who alone worships Thee on earth, is thrown into a furnace ; permit us to rescue him.”

‘But God said, “I permit every one of you to whom Abraham shall cry for aid to help him, yet if he turn only to Me, let Me alone rescue him.”

‘Then cried Abraham from the midst of the fire, “There is no God but Thee ! To Thee belong praise and glory !”

‘The flame meanwhile had consumed Abraham’s robe, and the angel Gabriel stepped before him, and asked, “Hast thou need of me ?” Abraham replied, “The help of God is all I need.”

‘All the creatures of the earth now tried to quench the fire ; only the lizard blew upon it, and as a punishment became thenceforward dumb. At God’s command Gabriel then cried to the fire, “Become cool, and do Abraham no harm.”

‘Then the fire grew cool, and a fountain sprang up in the midst of the furnace, and roses bloomed therein. Moreover, He sent him a silken robe from paradise, and an angel to keep him company for seven days ; and those seven days he called in after years the most precious of his life.’

It is a pretty legend, but its trivial details strongly contrast with the simple dignity of the Biblical narrative :—

‘And these three men . . . fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

‘Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see *four* men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.’

In the hour of trial an angel surely stands near the righteous, though hidden by a veil which our mortal eyes cannot yet pierce; but it is a received opinion that the fourth and sublime form which Nebuchadnezzar saw was verily and indeed our Blessed Lord. On the transcendent occasion of the first voluntary martyrdom for the Faith related in the Old Testament, we may well believe that the Son of Man vouchsafed to come down from heaven. It is some confirmation of this idea that on the first martyrdom mentioned in the New Testament—that of Stephen—he saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. According to the Apocryphal version, it was on perceiving their celestial companion that the Three Children broke into the hymn of praise and blessing known to us as the *Benedicite*—or Song of the Three Children, this last word having here its old meaning of youths of noble blood.

‘In some copies of the Greek version of Theodoret,’ says Dr. Gray, ‘this book is inserted between the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses of the third chapter of Daniel, as at the beginning of the book is prefixed the History of Susanna, and at the end is added that of Bel and the Dragon; but none of these additions are to be found in any Hebrew copy, nor do they appear ever to have existed in the Hebrew or Chaldaic language. It is probable that the same author invented or composed from traditional accounts all the Apocryphal additions which he interwove with the genuine work of Daniel. Both in the Latin version and in Coverdale’s translation this canticle is called “The Prayer of Azarias, and the Song of the Three Holy Children.”’


It appears to have been used as a hymn in the Jewish Church, though not received into the Hebrew Canon. ‘It was probably composed by an Alexandrine Jew as a paraphrase upon the 148th Psalm, and was used by the Christians in their devotions from the most early times. St. Cyprian quotes it as Holy Scripture, in which opinion he is supported by Rufinus, who inveighs against St. Jerome for doubting its Divine authority, and informs us that it was used in the Church of Toledo long before his time, who himself lived A.D. 390.’ According to the Fourth Council of Toledo, it was ‘used by the Church over all the world,’ and therefore was ordered to be sung by the clergy of Spain and Galicia every Lord’s Day, and on the festivals of the Church, under pain of excommunication.

‘In the ancient English offices the matins (*nocturnes*) terminated with *Te Deum*, and were immediately followed by lauds (ancient matins). This office began with several psalms, of which one was the “psalm *Benedicite*” or “The Song of the Three Children,” as it was variously called. This canticle was retained in the position it now occupies, and is appointed to follow the first lesson, in place of *Te Deum*, at the pleasure of the officiating minister. In the Mosarabic or ancient Spanish office *Benedicite* is also used at lauds. The ancient liturgies of the Gallican and Spanish Churches prescribed the Song of the Three Children to be sung between the lessons, and we adopt the same rule in the office of Morning Prayer. Benedict and Amalarius both speak of *Benedicite* as used at matins (lauds), and Athanasius appointed it to be said at the same time. When used as appointed by the English office, it may be regarded in the light of a responsory psalm.’

Be its history what it may, we must feel with Kingsley that ‘it is a glorious hymn, worthy of those three young men, worthy of all the noble army of martyrs ; and if the three young men did not actually use the very words of it, still it was what they believed ; and because they believed it, they had courage to tell Nebuchadnezzar that they were not careful to answer him, had no manner of anxiety whatsoever as to what they were to say when he called on them to worship his gods. For his gods, we know, were the sun, moon, and planets, and the angels, who (as the Chaldeans believed)

ruled over the heavenly bodies ; and that image of gold is supposed by some learned men to have been a sign or picture of the wondrous power of life and growth which there is in all earthly things. . . . So that the meaning of this Song of the Three Children is simply this : “ You bid us worship the things about us, which we see with our bodily eyes. We answer that we know the one true God, who made all these things, and that therefore, instead of worshipping *them*, we will bid them to worship *Him*.” ’

We will now proceed to study the first versicle of their song, first reverentially using the prayer of Bishop Andrews : ‘ Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who didst create the firmament, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, inhabited by the celestial powers, angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim ; who didst divide and fix the waters that be above the firmament, and make those mists and exhalations, from whence proceed showers and dew, hail and sleet, snow like wool, hoar-frost scattered like ashes, ice cast out like morsels, clouds brought from the ends of the earth, lightning and thunder, winds which Thou drawest out of Thy treasures, and storms which fulfil Thy word.’



CHAPTER I.

O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.

Works of the Lord—Heavens—Indifference of most people to the sky—How inanimate things can praise the Lord — Haydn's *Creation*—Raphael's Bible.

‘GLORIOUS are the works,’ says Bishop Horne, ‘profound the counsels, marvellous the dispensations of God, in nature, in providence, in grace. . . .’

‘Those which demand to be celebrated by the tongues of men are such as declare His glory and excite our admiration whenever we behold them. Of this sort are the shining frame of the heavens, and all the bodies which move therein ; the earth, with its furniture without and its contents within ; the magnificent and stupendous ocean which flows around it ; the different tribes of animals inhabiting both the one and the other ; and, above all, the construction of man, the lord of this lower world.’

How the wondrous works of creation are contrived we cannot fully know, but how, in one way or another, they are agents of a mighty and universal thanksgiving—the cause of praise to Him who is their cause—this may fitly be our study.

The poet of the *Christian Year* has shown us how we should view them :—

‘ There is a book, who runs may read,
Which heavenly truth imparts,
And all the lore its scholars need,
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The works of God, above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that book, to show
How God Himself is found.

Thou who hast given me eyes to see
And love this sight so fair,
Give me a heart to find out Thee,
And read Thee everywhere.’

‘ The creation of God is the school of Christians,’ remarks Jones of Nayland, ‘ if they use it aright. The natural world of God’s making is full of wonder and instruction ; it is open to all, it is common to all. . . . The student in his solitary walk, the husbandman at his labour, the saint at his prayers, may have as much as they can desire, and have nothing to repent of, for they will then draw nearer to God, because they will then see farther into His truth, wisdom, and goodness.’ Everything in the heavens and earth was originally good and beautiful. Hence the expressive phrase, ‘ and God saw ’—that is, critically surveyed it to see—‘ that it was good.’

‘ Some of the works of the visible creation were good because they were useful and necessary, and because the life of man could not be supported without them,’ observes Mozley, in one of his Parochial Sermons ; ‘ others were good because they were full of

beauty, and imparted the greatest pleasure and delight to beings who were endowed with reason, and who were gifted with the perceptions whereby they could discern their beauty.' Even if the works of man when finished be flawless—and of how few can this be said!—the tooth of time begins instantly to bite, and eventually to destroy them. But God's works grow not old. There are a class of things which change, and a class that change not; or, if they change, it is often—as in the alteration of rocks and rivers—into other forms and motions, which add to 'the greatness, and wonder, and mystery of external nature.'

'Nature,' says a great preacher of our own time, 'is a robe of beauty, luminous with the revelations of God's mind and will.' Even in an age when nature was little loved or studied, we find Addison writing: 'The supreme Author of our being made so many objects appear beautiful that He might render the whole creation more gay and delightful. He has given almost everything about us the power of raising an agreeable idea in the imagination, so that it is impossible for us to behold His works with coldness or indifference, or to survey so many beauties without a secret satisfaction and complacency. We are everywhere entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions; we discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation. We know certainly that our blessed Lord Himself was filled with admiration of the beauty of nature by His praising the lilies of the field,

and telling us that the greatest of earthly kings, "arrayed in all his glory," was not equal to one of them. We may feel assured from this that there are far more lovely things in the world to come, and that the love of nature is an enjoyment worthy of heaven, and likely to have an even higher exercise there.' Let us listen to one whose wise and delicate thoughts have been made known to us by the tender piety and respect of her son :—

'All the loveliest works of Nature are but the symbol and sacrament of a greater and more perfect beauty still, of which a glimpse comes to us now and then through the shining veil upon which we have been allowed to gaze'—gaze, however, only as she and Keble also truly say—in glimpses.

'Of the bright things in earth and air
How little can the heart embrace !
Soft shades and gleaming lights are *there*
I know it well, but cannot trace.'

This thought is quaintly carried out by an older poet :—

'Weigh me the fire, or canst thou find
A way to measure out the wind ;
Distinguish all those floods that are
Mix't in that watery theatre ;
And taste thou them as saltless there
As in their charnel first they were ;
Tell me the people that do keep
Within the kingdom of the deep ;
Or fetch me back that cloud again,
Beshivered into seeds of rain ;
Tell me the motes, dust, sands, and spears
Of corn when Summer shakes his ears ;

Show me that world of stars, and whence
They noiseless spill their influence ;
This if thou canst, then show me Him
That rides the glorious Cherubim.'

HERRICK.

'There is hardly a department, however narrow, in the whole range of human knowledge,' said Bishop Thirlwall, 'that is not absolutely unfathomable and inexhaustible ; and its chief adepts would be the first to own or proclaim that no human life is long enough to make any one completely master of it. This holds, not only with regard to the higher *-ologies*—theology, philology, geology, zoology, etc.—but even to their minutest ramifications.'

Lives, I believe, have been spent and may be spent on the minutest compartments of animal and vegetable life. The study can never be exhausted. Thus, then, it is acknowledged, that man, with all his intellect and insatiable desire for knowledge, can only go a certain way along the path of exploration. 'The difficulties of the natural world,' said the late Professor Sedgwick, whose geological learning and religious faith went hand in hand, 'call forth the highest faculties of the human understanding, and ought to teach humility.'

It is interesting to know how the scheme of the universe was viewed by a well-known astronomer.¹ He considers it to have been framed as it is by the Creator in order that it may be in some degree comprehensible to the human understanding, and thus bring us into

¹ *Notes on the Principles of Pure and Applied Calculations.*
By Professor Challis, Cambridge.

intellectual relations with Himself. How grateful should we be that it has pleased God to endow us, as he says, with 'faculties to comprehend His works, so that with every new appreciation of His design we seem to be taken more and more into His confidence.'

In the constant mention of God's works by the Psalmist—and note that the Psalms always speak of the earth and natural objects with a fearless gladness, as made by God and blessed by Him—we find two thoughts markedly running through them. One is, that God rejoices in His works. 'The Lord shall rejoice in His works.' Secondly, that we also should rejoice in them. 'Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works; I will rejoice in giving thanks for the operation of Thy hands.' Again, in the *Jubilate*, all lands and peoples are called on to rejoice—and mark the reason: 'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.' Were it not so, where were the cause for rejoicing?

We are able from our own experience to estimate in some slight degree the pleasure which His works afford to the Creator. The buildings which man has erected, the pictures he has painted, the books he has written—everything, in short, where he has put creative power—give him delight, and he suffers if he sees them injured or effaced. Does not this help us to feel something of the sorrow felt by our heavenly Father when we mar the image of Himself impressed upon us by His gracious will?

But in the hurry and bustle of daily life, how little do we see or think of the marvels around us, even

those most patent ! A fine passage in Ruskin's *Modern Painters* brings this home as perhaps no other words could :—

✕ ‘It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which Nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works ; and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There are not many of her other works in which some more material or essential purpose is not answered by every part of their organisation, but every essential purpose of the sky might, so far as we know, be answered, if once in three days or thereabouts a great, ugly, black rain-cloud were brought up over the blue, and everything well watered, and so all left blue again till next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew. And instead of this, there is not a moment of any day of our lives when Nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure.

‘And every man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few ; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them ; he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them ; but the sky is for all ; bright as it is, it is

not "too bright nor good for human nature's daily food ;" it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for the soothing it and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together ; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us is as distinct as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential, and yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought but as it has to do with our animal sensations ; we look upon all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, only as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accidents, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness or a glance of admiration.

'If, in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity, we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another, it has been windy, and another, it has been warm. Who among the whole chattering crowd can tell me of the forms and the precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain?

Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed, unregretted as unseen; or, if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross, or what is extraordinary; and yet it is not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature which can only be addressed through lamp-black and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual—that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood—things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally, which are never wanting, and never repeated, which are to be found always, yet each found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given. These are what the artist of highest aim must study; it is these, by the combination of which his ideal is to be created; these, of which so little notice is ordinarily taken by common observers, that I fully believe, little as people in general are concerned with art, more of their ideas of sky are derived from pictures than from reality, and that if we could examine the conception formed in the minds of most educated persons when we talk of clouds, it would frequently be found composed of fragments of blue and white reminiscences of the old masters.'

If anything which this world shows us might be expected to be found again in the next, surely it would be the scenery of the sky; but we are told by Revelation that in the Heavenly Jerusalem there shall be no more need of sun and moon, that the river of the water of life and the tree of life set in the midst of the Paradise of God will replace our waters and our green things. In that 'ampler æther, that diviner air,' there will be neither clouds nor rain nor snow. These are gifts to us here, and it is our duty to receive them gratefully and use them rightly.

It may be asked, How can the inanimate works of God be called on to praise Him? They do so by obeying His will, and showing forth His majesty, His wisdom, goodness, and love. The Psalms are full of a like spirit to that which fills the *Benedicite*; numerous instances will at once occur to the mind of a reader. They praise Him too by the influence they have exercised on literature and the arts. Homer has given a world-famous picture of the Creation in his description of the shield of Achilles. Heraclitus (B.C. 500) implies an allegory in this description, and Pope says, 'the intention was no less than to draw the picture of the whole world in the compass of this shield. We see first the universe in general; the heavens are spread, the stars are hung up, the earth is stretched forth, the seas are poured round.'

'There shone the image of the Master-mind;
There earth, there heaven, there ocean he design'd;
Th' unweary'd sun, the moon compleatly round;
The starry lights that heaven's high convex crown'd.'

Caëdmon, the poet-monk of Whitby, was the first bard of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and the Creation was his theme. We all know the beautiful description which the Venerable Bede gives of the rustic labourer, who in a dream was commanded to celebrate this subject.

Passing over many allegories and descriptions in succeeding poets, we come to Milton's sublime account of the Creation, with the hymn of thanksgiving—

‘ These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good !
Almighty ! Thine this universal frame.’

Later again we have emphatically a poet of ‘ the works of the Lord ’ in Wordsworth, who has more than any modern poet of that antique spirit which felt a Divine Presence in mountain, valley, waterfall, stars, universe. It was hardly to him a figure of speech when he exclaimed—

‘ Mountains and vales and floods I call on you ;’

and it was with fervid truth that he declared he was

‘ Still a lover of the woods
And mountains ; and of all that we behold
From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.’

Music, in her turn, has been used to exalt and praise God's works. The *Creation* of Haydn is a familiar instance. Spohr too has a magnificent composition—*The Creation of Sound*. The first movement repre-

sents the awakening of Life after the creation of Sound. It is very grand. We shall notice other compositions later.

Turning to painting, we find a well-known ancient example of how our elder painters treated the Creation in what is known as 'Raphael's Bible,' in the Loggia of the Vatican. A modern one appears in the frescoed roof of Ely Cathedral. The subject is the creation of the universe. Stems and branches of foliage embrace and sustain five circles placed crosswise. The central circle contains the figure of the Saviour in an aureole, in the act of exercising creative power. In His left hand He holds the world, and He is surrounded by sun, moon, and stars. Around Him is the text, 'I am before all things, and by Me all things exist.' In the circle beneath is the Holy Dove, brooding over the waters of the new-created earth. In the other circles are Cherubim and Seraphim, holding scrolls, on which are the words, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.' Round the whole is the text from the Revelation, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.' Equally true is it that 'the earth hath He given to the children of men,' and both the Platonic school of philosophy and the Christian Fathers concur in the name by which they designate Almighty God—Demiurgus, *worker for the people.*

✓ Sunday February 6th 187.

CHAPTER II.

Angels.

Angels in Painting—Frequent allusions to, in Holy Scripture—Fallen angels—Gabriel and Michael—*Faust*—Raphael—Newman on angels—Chaucer's 'sweet St. Cecily'—Spenser's ministering angels—Angel of Death—Southey's Azrael—Arabian Legends—Santa Francesca Romana—Angels in Sculpture.

'O YE angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever,' says the *Benedicite*, and the corresponding versicle of the *Te Deum* proclaims, 'To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein. To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,' words taken from Isaiah's vision of the Lord in His glory, and developed into the *Gloria in Excelsis* at the end of the Eucharistic service, when, says Wheatley, 'it is generally received that angels are present.' 'What are angels?' asks Bishop Andrews. 'Surely they are spirits, glorious spirits, heavenly spirits, immortal spirits. For their nature or substance, spirits; for their quality or property, glorious; for their place of abode, heavenly; for their durance or continuance, immortal.' The words '*fiat lux*' have fancifully been interpreted to apply to the creation of

angels. Commenting on this, and showing that it is a mistaken view, Sir Thomas Browne quaintly adds, 'Conceive light invisible, and that is a spirit.'

In fact it is impossible to imagine an angel at all, except as a more glorified and glorious human being; with wings, to express the supernatural powers. Beautiful and glorious as the angels of old Italian painters are—need we instance those of Fra Angelico?—they are rarely superhuman in conception, and too often become only lovely youths, or most unpoetical cherubs.

There are great exceptions, however; those who have visited the Campo Santo at Pisa must recollect the singularly poetical angels of Orcagna, with limbs ending in wings—perhaps the most original representation ever given of these spirits, unless those of our own Blake, whose 'sons of God shouting for joy' have an altogether unearthly and supernal rapture; and there are pictures by Murillo where the background is one glory of golden light and angel faces. The angels of poetry appeal more to the imagination than those set before our eyes by painting. Take, for instance, Dante's awful spirit, who strikes the gate of Dis, or those of his Purgatory, with wings of bright green, and green draperies, kept in a perpetual state of undulation by the fanning of their wings, with features too dazzling to be distinguished, and Milton's radiant seraph, suggested surely by some Italian picture seen by him in his visit to the land of Art—

'A seraph wing'd : six wings he wore to shade
His lineaments divine : the pair that clad

Each shoulder broad came mantling o'er his breast
With regal ornament ; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold
And colours dipped in heaven ; the third his feet
Shadow'd from either heel with feather'd mail,
Sky tinctured grain.'

The instances of angelic appearances chronicled in the Old Testament are far too numerous to mention, although it must be remembered that the word 'angel' is used in some instances when the Second Person of the Trinity is meant, as in Jacob's words, 'The Angel of the Covenant bless the lads.' They appear even more frequently in the New Testament. We find them present in every great event of our Blessed Lord's life, with the single exception of the Crucifixion.

Gabriel announced His birth ; and there was a peculiar fitness in the angel who appeared to Daniel to explain 'the dread vision of the later days,' and to Elisabeth, to announce the birth of Christ's great forerunner, being chosen to bear the message to the Virgin-Mother. Angels told the birth of the Good Shepherd to the men keeping watch over their flocks by night. Through the warning of an angel Joseph fled into Egypt ; they ministered to Christ after the Temptation, strengthened Him—awful and touching thought—in the garden of Gethsemane, watched by His tomb, and attended at His Ascension.

Their last words spoken in man's hearing were on that day. Finally, they will accompany our Divine Master when He comes to judge the world. That

meanwhile they still minister to His people we know, for twice an angel delivered St. Peter from prison ; and we read that one stood by St. Paul on the night of the shipwreck in the Ægean Sea, to promise that there should be no loss of any man's life. Moreover, the Saviour has told us that there is joy in the presence of the angels over a repentant sinner. There is something very touching in the thought that those bright creatures should bend from their heavenly seats and watch for human salvation ; and in this we see a proof of a judgment to come, for 'if there is no hell from which to be saved, there is no reason for the gladness of angels when the lost sheep is recovered and brought back to the fold.'

But there are not only the celestial host, but also fallen angels.

' See Lucifer like lightning fall,
Dashed from his throne of pride.'

These, however, do not concern us in a study of the *Benedicite*.

The Jews believed in ten orders of angels, and Dionysius, in that *Hierarchia Cœlestis* which exercised so wide and singular an effect on the belief of the Middle Ages, divides them into nine, giving the first place to the Angels of Love, the second to the Angels of Light. The only angels recognised by the Canonical Scriptures are Gabriel and Michael ; in the apocryphal Book of Tobit Raphael is named, and in that of Esdras are Uriel, Scalthiel, and Jeremiel. The name of Gabriel signifies 'Man of God.' Milton calls him 'chief of the

angelic guards,' while Tasso styles him 'secondo fra i primi,' giving the first place to St. Michael. Of course he figures in innumerable pictures of the Annunciation, mostly with a branch of lilies in his hand, as an emblem of purity, or else one growing in a pot is placed near on the floor. Sometimes he is crowned with olive, and with a branch of the same tree in his hand, or a scroll on which is inscribed 'Ave Maria.' Dante makes him sing this salutation bending with outstretched wings before her in Paradise.

In pictures of the Resurrection the angel who is seated on the stone has generally a staff terminating in a *fleur-de-lis* in his left hand. This is the attribute proper to the archangel who, having announced the birth of the Saviour, was also the appropriate announcer of His Resurrection. To St. Michael both Jews and Christians have united in attributing the pre-eminence over all other spirits. He is always represented as the chief archangel, conqueror of the powers of hell, and captain of the heavenly host. 'It was subsequent to the captivity,' says Mrs. Jameson, 'that the active spirit of Good, under the name of Michael, came to be regarded as the special protector of the Hebrew nation; the veneration paid to him by the Jews was adopted, or rather retained, by the Oriental Christians, and though suppressed for a time, was revived and spread over the West, where we find it popular and almost universal from the eighth century.' Numerous legends gather round his name. It was Michael who chained the rebel angels in mid-air; it is he who weighs souls in

the balance ; when pestilence struck Rome in the sixth century, it was Michael whom the Pope beheld sheathing his sword as he stood on that tomb of Hadrian ever after known as the Castle of St. Angelo ; it is Michael who appears, 'severe in youthful beauty,' triumphant over the dragon, as in Raphael's famous picture painted for Francis I. The king had left him the choice of the subject, and he selected St. Michael, the military patron of France, and of that knightly order of which the king was grand master. Guido's painting of the same subject is nearly as famous. Of the various localities connected with this archangel, the most celebrated are our own Mount St. Michael and Mont St. Michel au Péril de la Mer, in Normandy. On this majestic rock stand a church and monastery, the latter formerly crowned by a gilded image of the archangel, which moved with the wind, its glittering sword flashing in the sunlight. From its foundation this church was visited by pilgrims of all nations ; among them were our own Rufus and Henry II. The pilgrims to Mont St. Michel gathered in the sacred bay shells, which they attached to their mantles as an ornament and sign which caused their religious enthusiasm to be recognised wherever they went. On these *coquilles de St. Michel*, as they were called, there were often riveted small figures of the archangel.

In 1469 Louis XI. made a pilgrimage to Mont St. Michel, and instituted a military order, with a collar of gold whence depended a golden image. The order commemorated the alleged apparition of St. Michael on

the bridge at Orleans when that city was besieged by the English in 1428. At the time of the Revolution the abbey was transformed into a prison.

When St. Michael is not represented in Art as slaying the dragon, he is usually the Angel of Judgment, as in the fine picture by Justus of Ghent, where he holds a balance ; in one scale a little naked figure, typical of a human soul, is kneeling with clasped hands, in thankfulness ; the other falls down in an attitude of despair. The same idea appears in the stained window at the church of Martham, Norfolk, where St. Michael and the demons are weighing souls. Cowley attributes to this archangel the task of slaying the first-born in Egypt :—

‘ Michael the warlike prince does downward fly,
Swift as the journeys of the sight,
Swift as the race of light,
And with his winged will cuts through the yielding sky.
Through Egypt’s wicked land his march he took,
And, as he marched, the sacred first-born strook
Of every womb ; none did he spare,—
None, from the meanest beast to Cenchre’s purple heir.’

It is as a messenger of Divine judgment that an old superstition regards him, when, as the old folks in some parts of England say, his wing is seen in the clouds. Every one must have noticed how sometimes after sunset the clouds are swept into the shape of a vast wing, as of a gigantic bird, whose body is invisible.

St. Michael was greatly magnified in the Koran, and this perhaps explains the respect paid to St. George by Moslems, for they may mistake the one for the other,

owing to each being represented as conqueror over an evil thing.

The Festival of the Holy Angels' Guardian is no longer observed in our Church, but one day in the year she sets apart to record her thankfulness for the benefits received by the ministry of holy angels. And because St. Michael is described in Scripture 'as of great power and dignity,' says Wheatley, 'and as presiding and watching over the Church of God with a particular vigilance and application, and triumphing over the devil, it therefore bears his name.'

With Raphael we pass into legend.

'I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One,' he is made to say in the Book of Tobit. He, tradition says, it was who appeared to the shepherds at the Nativity. Sometimes, as a guardian spirit, he has a sword, in pictorial representation. He is generally painted in the dress of a pilgrim or traveller; but in the Breviary of Anne of Bretagne (A.D. 1500) he is represented as wearing a pale green tunic, bordered with gold, and with wings of a deep rose-colour.

It is mentioned by Bishop Patrick that in the Sarum Missal there is a mass proper to Raphael the archangel, as the protector of pilgrims and travellers, and a skilful worker with medicine. His name has been given to many churches in England. Near the bridge of Cordova is the figure of an angel on the top of a tall and slender column. It is known as the 'Triumph

of Raphael.' An inscription in old Spanish says : ' I am Raphael, the angel whom God has appointed guardian of this city.' Readers of *Faust* will recollect the prologue, so finely translated by Sir Theodore Martin, where the archangel Raphael bids Gabriel and Michael mark the wonders of the starry heavens :—

' The sun in chorus, as of old
With brother spheres, is sounding still,
And on its thunderous orbit rolled,
Doth its appointed course fulfil.

The angels, as they gaze, grow strong,
Though fathom it they never may ;
These works sublime, untouched by wrong,
Are bright as on the primal day.'

From Raphael we turn to Uriel :—

' The archangel Uriel, one of the seven
Who in God's presence, nearest to His throne,
Stand ready at command, and are His eyes
That run through all the heav'ns, or down to th' earth
Bear His swift errands over moist and dry,
O'er sea and land,'

says Milton, and elsewhere he mentions this angel as 'the same whom John saw also in the sun.' The name of Uriel is derived from the Hebrew words signifying 'God is my light.' The names of Gabriel, Raphael and Michael have all passed into Christian nomenclature, but that of Uriel has never attracted popular fancy.

'There have been ages of the world,' writes Newman, 'in which men have thought too much of angels, and paid them excessive honour ; honoured them so perversely as to forget the supreme worship due to

Almighty God. This is the sin of a dark age. But the sin of what is called an educated age, such as our own, is just the reverse : to account of them slightly, or not at all ; to ascribe all we see around us, not to their agency, but to certain assumed laws of nature. This, I say, is likely to be our sin in proportion as we are initiated into the learning of this world ; and this is the danger of many (so-called) philosophical pursuits now in fashion, and recommended zealously to the notice of large portions of the community hitherto strangers to them—chemistry, geology, and the like ; the danger, that is, of resting in things seen, and forgetting unseen things, and an ignorance about them.’

And, bearing this warning in mind, we will now dwell a little upon guardian and ministering angels. Although from earliest times there has been a belief that each individual has his guardian spirit, there seems to be no example in any but modern times of a pictorial representation of child or man led and protected by an angel. In poetry however this is otherwise. In a hymn translated from the Latin, dating from the fourth century, guardian angels are named.

‘ Ere the waning light decay,
God of all, to Thee we pray ;
Let Thine angel-guards descend,
Us to succour and defend.

Guard from dreams that may affright,
Guard from terrors of the night ;
Guard from foes, without, within,
Outward danger, inward sin.’

Again, Chaucer makes his 'sweet St. Cecily' say—

'I have an angel which thus loveth me,
That with great love, whether I wake or sleep,
Is ready aye my body for to keep ;

and Henry Vaughan writes—

'As angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul when man doth sleep.'

Most beautiful of all are the verses of Spenser on ministering angels—Spenser, whose deep reverence when he touches on heavenly things contrasts strikingly with the audacity of Milton—

'And is there care in Heaven? And is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is: else much more wretched were the case
Of men than beasts. But oh! the eternal grace
Of highest God that loves His creatures so,
And all His works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels He sends to and fro
To serve to wicked man, to serve His wicked foe !

How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succour us that succour want !
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant !
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant ;
And all for love, and nothing for reward.
Oh, why should heavenly God to men have such regard ?'

Perhaps during his residence in Ireland Spenser had heard the legend of how angelic presences illumined the cell where Columba prayed, talked to him on a height still called 'The Angels' hill,' and how, when he died

in his little church, where he had hastened while all was yet dark, when the bell rang for matins, the whole sky was illumined with celestial light, while angels bore his saintly soul to Paradise, as they had done that of Lazarus the beggar.

One of the loveliest pictorial representations of angels bearing the holy dead away from earth is found in Luini's St. Catherine carried over land and sea by angelic bearers. Perhaps among Christians 'the Angel of Death' is little more than a figure of speech, but the Moslems believe that to a special angel the office of ending each man's life is intrusted. Readers of a fine poem too much neglected—namely, Southey's *Thalaba*—will remember how Azrael is introduced:—

‘ And Azrael, the Death-angel, stood before them :
His countenance was dark,
Solemn, but not severe,
It awed, but struck no terror to the heart ; . . .
And Azrael from his sword
Let fall the drops of bitterness and death.’

Purchas tells us that the Rabbis say the Angel of Death stands at the head of a deathbed, holding his sword, ‘having on the end thereof three drops of gall ; the sick man spying this deadly angel, openeth his mouth with fear, and then those drops fall in ; of which one killeth him, the second maketh him pale, the third rotteth and purifieth.’ Another Rabbinical legend, quoted by Southey from an old writer, relates how this office came to be appointed to Azrael. It pleased God to make known His scheme of the Creation unto the angels, and having

commanded Gabriel to draw out a deed of fealty and homage, which was then shown to the host of heaven, He said unto them, 'Which of you will descend to earth and bring back a handful thereof?' Whereupon such a number descended that the earth was covered with them, but all declared it unworthy to be brought before the throne of God. On this Azrael, an angel of an extraordinary stature, flew down, and from the four corners of the earth brought back a handful; and the Almighty said to him, 'O Azrael! thou shalt be he who separateth the souls from the bodies of those creatures I am about to make.' And the earth which Azrael had brought was washed in the fountains of heaven, and shone more beautifully than the sun in his utmost glory. Gabriel was then commanded to display it, yet inanimate, to the angels, and they all bent reverently before it, except Eblis, who haughtily refused, saying, 'Unworthy were it for me, created out of celestial fire, to pay homage to so base a thing.' For his disobedience and pride he was banished from heaven. According to another legend, given by D'Olisson, after the fall of our first parents, a great number of spirits, who had been allowed to dwell on earth, rebelled, and Azrael was sent with a legion of angels to chase them among the isles, and disperse them along the sea-coasts.

These fantastic legends have little in them which is poetical or comforting; we turn from them with relief to the beautiful evening prayer of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, where he prays God to 'bless his deathbed with the assistance and guard of angels.'

This prayer is in the *Horæ Sacræ*, and all may make it their own, remembering also that when our Lord bade us pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' He proposed to us the angelic as the model of the Christian life.

One of the most graceful angelic legends connected with daily life is that told in the *Legenda Aurea* of St. Francesca Romana, who was constantly interrupted by calls of duty to her household while kneeling in her oratory. When this happened she would close her book, saying that a wife and a mother, when called upon, must quit her God at the altar, and find Him in her household affairs. 'Now it happened once' that she 'was called away four times just as she was beginning the same verse, and returning the fifth time, she found that verse written upon the page in letters of golden light by the hand of her guardian angel.'

In the gallery of Turin there is a picture of St. Francesca Romana, holding her book, a basket of bread beside her, and an angel, very like a youthful acolyte, standing before her. Visitors to her church at Rome will recollect Bernini's bas-relief in marble of the same subject. She was born A.D. 1384, and until convents were closed in Rome, hers, in the Torre de' Spechi, was almost as fashionable as a place of education as was the Jesuit Trinità del Monte.

Bernini's angel is only one of countless examples in sculpture. Far finer is the angel of the resurrection by Tenerani, grand in patient waiting, nor should we forget the angel of the sepulchre—perhaps

somewhat too stern, but finely conceived—the work of an American sculptor, E. D. Palmer.

But if we would see sculptured angels in their appropriate place, we must look for them in cathedrals, both at home and abroad. The numberless examples which may be found in them testify to the loving belief which the Christian worshipper has ever had in them. They have given their name to chapel, and tower, and choir; the ‘presbytery’ or ‘angel choir’ of Lincoln is a matchless example. It was completed before A.D. 1282, when the shrine of St. Hugh was removed into it, and obtained its name from the thirty sculptured figures in the spandrils of the arches. These rank among the very best examples of early English art. All visitors to Wells Cathedral will remember the crowd of angels on the west front, holding crowns, and chanting the *Gloria in Excelsis*; they are supposed to represent the angels of the great Ambrosian hymn, proclaiming ‘To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein.’ Old Fuller called it ‘a masterpiece of art indeed, made of imagery in just proportion.’ On the west front of Bath Abbey is a sculpture of Jacob’s dream; figures of angels ascending and descending are engraved on golden bands around the Bishop’s pastoral staff; and innumerable other instances might be quoted. As we should expect, there are beautiful examples, both in painting and sculpture, of angels as choristers.

‘Theirs,’ beautifully says Mrs. Jameson, ‘is the privilege to sound that hymn of praise which goes up

from this boundless and harmonious universe of suns and stars and worlds and rejoicing creatures, toward the God who created them ; theirs is the music of the spheres, they sing, and singing in their glory move !’

One of the loveliest instances of musical angels is found in Fra Angelico’s Coronation, where the ‘cherubic host pour forth their hymns of triumph, blow their uplifted trumpets, and touch immortal harps and viols.’

A procession of chanting angels formerly surmounted the organ of the Duomo at Florence. Indeed, angelic figures used at one time to act a somewhat grotesque part on organs, for trumpets were placed in their hands which by means of mechanism could be moved to and from their mouths ; and in their midst a gigantic angel would sometimes be placed hovering in a glory above the instrument, beating time with his baton, as their conductor ! On the organ of the famous chapel of King’s College, Cambridge, a golden angel still stands, with uplifted trumpet, probably the work of Gibson, who carved the beautiful screen.

Some of the most exquisite music composed by Handel has reference to angels. In his oratorio of *Samson* we have—

‘ Let the bright seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow.’

The well-known ‘Angels ever bright and fair’ is another instance, and loveliest of all is the invocation of Jephthah on his daughter’s death, ‘Waft her, angels.’

The idea of angels watching round a saintly death-bed was carried beyond the grave in mediæval piety.

They kneel with outstretched wings beside the figures of the departed on monumental tombs. We may instance the beautiful tomb in Chichester Cathedral to Bishop Sherborne, who died just as the Reformation began ; two exquisitely carved angels bear the mitre. The sculptor may have had in his mind that passage in Zechariah where the angel bade a fair mitre to be set on the head of Joshua the high priest : 'So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and the angel of the Lord stood by.' Angels with censers are also frequent in cathedrals ; there are two in St. Asaph, at the head of an ancient tomb, probably that of Bishop Anian, who died A.D. 1293.

Angels have been comparatively little sculptured in modern times, but there is a grand example in the kneeling angel holding a shell which serves as a font, designed by Thorwaldsen, and now in Copenhagen.

CHAPTER III.

Waters above and below the Firmament.

Heavens—Two meanings of 'heaven'—Tintoretto—Martin—Cabalistic view of heaven—Scandinavian view—Addison on heaven—Firmament created on the second day—Bishop Andrews on heaven—Waters above the firmament—Importance of dew and showers in hot countries—Water—Clouds—Ruskin on clouds—Wells—Stanley on wells—Well worship—Sacred wells—Seas and floods—Mediterranean : Its connection with history—The ocean—Laws which govern the relations between the earth and ocean—Depth of the ocean—Colour of sea-water—Effect of winds and currents—Mrs. Hemans on the sea—No more sea—Hoar-frost—Ymir—Ambrose Phillips—Dante's frozen lake—New-fallen snow—Glaciers—The White King—Cowper's winter morning walk—Blessing of the rivers in Russia—Legends.

'I WILL consider Thy heavens.' 'Our Father which art in heaven.' It is evident that in these two passages the word 'heaven' is taken in two different meanings : firstly, the vault of air *heaved* above us, beautifully described by the poet-artist Blake as 'the lovely blue and shining heavenly shell;' secondly, as that state or abode which the eye of man hath not seen neither can his mind conceive. Even the vision of the Apocalypse reveals only something inconceivably radiant and glorious, dimly apprehended. 'Heaven is not a place but a thought,' it has been said, and yet universal

instinct feels and desires it to be something more than this. Possibly it was to satisfy this craving that our Lord gave the assurance: 'I go to prepare a *place* for you.' Poor would that heaven be which the heart of man could really conceive! Even the mighty imagination of Dante cannot make the descriptions of his *Paradiso* satisfying, or bring before us as realities

'The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble as they gaze.'

His descriptions are most beautiful when vaguest, as when he speaks of the dancing, moving flames which advanced to meet him, singing what he could not write, for in that region there were things so lovely that they were beyond the power of words to tell, and the song of those flames was among them.

Even the naïve audacity of early art has usually shrunk from attempting to depict heaven, but in the Doge's palace at Venice there is an immense picture of Heaven by Tintoretto. In the midst is a most beautiful figure of our Blessed Lord, surrounded by a brilliant white light; two angels kneel beside Him. It is the innermost circle, the heaven of heavens. Paths of light stream outward from the centre; they are thronged with figures of all ages, looking toward the throne, some kneeling, some seated in an attitude of adoration. In modern art there is a picture by Martin, representing the plains of heaven—exquisitely green swards, intermixed with groves, through which are seen beautiful beings, moving in a blessed peace.

Music too has sought to express the glory of

heaven ; one of the finest choruses in Haydn's *Creation* is 'The heavens are telling.'

As we should expect, in all religions we find an effort to describe heaven. The Cabalistic writers describe seven, according to degrees : the first being the space between the clouds and the earth ; the second, the region of the clouds ; the four next being the abode of various grades of angels, while the highest is the dwelling of God and of the chief among the angels. Grotius said that the Jews divided heaven into Nubifirum, the cloudy region ; Astrifirum, the firmament ; and Empyreum, the abode of God and His angels. In Aryan mythology we hear of a shining realm, whence the sun, moon, and stars receive their light, and lightning has its origin ; here the souls of the pious dead dwell in everlasting bliss. In this heaven grew two trees—one called the *gaokerena*, and from its juice the drink of immortality is made ; the other has a name meaning 'inviolable,' and it bears the seeds of every kind of plant. Both grow in a lake, where ten fish guard them from a lizard, sent by the evil spirit to destroy the *gaokerena*. A bird perches on the top of the inviolable tree ; 'when he rises, a thousand branches shoot forth ; when he perches again, he breaks a thousand branches, and makes their seed fall.'

Even more prosaic were the views of the Scandinavians as to a future state, but they anticipated a time when the world and its gods should be destroyed, and something new and more beautiful should replace

them. The Greeks can hardly have been said to have a heaven at all in their mythology.

‘Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory,’ says the *Te Deum*, and truly we shall find it so, even when we turn from the first meaning of ‘heaven’ to the second. ‘When we survey the whole earth,’ wrote Addison, ‘and the several planets that lie within its neighbourhood, we are filled with a pleasing astonishment to see so many worlds hanging one above another, and sliding round their axes in such an amazing pomp and solemnity. If, after this, we contemplate those wide fields of æther, that reach in height as far as from Saturn to the fixed stars, and run abroad almost to an infinitude, our imagination finds its capacity filled with so immense a prospect, and puts itself upon the stretch to comprehend it. But if we yet rise higher, and consider the fixed stars as so many vast oceans of flame that are each of them attended by a different set of planets, and still discover new firmaments and new lights that are sunk farther in those unfathomable depths of æther, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our telescopes, we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the immensity and magnificence of nature.’

It was not until the second day that the creation of the firmament took place. ‘Let there be an *expansion*; let it divide the waters below from the waters above.’ ‘This operation,’ observes Sharon Turner, ‘divided the waters that belong to our earth into two portions as well as into two states. The state of water

in the seas is as dissimilar to its state in clouds as if they were unrelated substances; vapour and water would not be imagined to be the same things, if we did not know of their relationship to each other, for imagination can hardly conceive the enormous amount of this fluid which is always suspended or moving in the airy regions above us.' It should be observed that the Hebrew word translated 'firmament' (*rakia*) implies something beaten or spread out. Job xxxvii. 18: 'Hast thou spread' (or hammered) 'out the sky which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass?'—the mirror to which he refers being made of metal. There is an idea of solidity in the Hebrew; in Ezek. i. 22-26 the firmament is the floor on which stands the heavenly throne. Hebrew, Greeks and Latins more or less regarded it as supporting sun, moon and stars—a cave (*cælum*, *οὐρανός*)—which also gives the idea of height.

In the meditations of Bishop Andrews we find one which may fitly take its place here, before we pass from the firmament itself to the waters, which the *Benedicite* next evokes: 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who didst create the firmament, . . . who didst divide and fix the waters that be above the firmament, and make those mists and exhalations, from whence proceed showers and dew, hail and sleet, snow like wool, hoar-frost scattered like ashes, ice cast out like morsels, clouds brought from the ends of the earth, lightning and thunder, winds which Thou drawest out of Thy treasures, and storms which fulfil Thy word.'

The expression 'waters above the firmament' no

doubt corresponds to the ancient idea of a kind of solid floor or roof, possibly with windows and doors, for both these expressions are found in connection with it. Since the fluid streams could be solidified by cold, why should not that blue ocean of æther overhead be solid too? Sometimes it melted, and came down in showers and dew upon the thirsty land, and these two are by and by invoked to praise the Lord. One of the petitions in an ancient Liturgy is, 'Remember, O Lord, to grant us pleasant dews'; and dew is twice mentioned in the *Benedicite*. Dwellers in temperate climates cannot realise the importance of 'showers' and 'dew' in regions where there are long periods of drought. Even in the south of France and Italy, however, the wonderful change wrought by the fall of rain at the end of summer is sufficiently striking to enable us to imagine in some degree what it does in the East, and to comprehend how much to Eastern ears was implied by such sayings as 'He shall come down as the rain;' 'He loveth the thirsty land'—words which no one who has heard Mendelssohn's *Elijah* can listen to without recalling the magnificent music to which they are set in that oratorio—'dews of Hermon,' or the strength of that malediction, 'Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you.' Sweet as the words of Keble's evening hymn are—

'When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,'

they mean comparatively little to the inhabitants of

northern climes, but to the dweller in lands where dew takes the place of showers they are full of meaning. In Isaac's blessing of Jacob, and in that of Jacob to his beloved Joseph, dew is used as the equivalent of life and fertility, and again we find the simile in the benediction bestowed on Esau; in fact, it is an image continually used in Scripture. The drenching night-dews of Palestine make the nights very cold, and the command in Exodus (xxii. 27) that pledged raiment was to be restored at sunset, may be traced to the need in that country, where it is common to sleep out of doors, of having a cloak to wrap the sleeper in. The Arab uses the same outer covering by night or by day.

Showers, too, are especially named in the *Benedicite*—not the wild rain-storms of the Tropics, but such as Keble describes in his hymn for Rogation Sunday:—

‘Deep is the silence as of summer noon,
When a soft shower
Will trickle soon,
A gracious rain, freshening the weary bower.’

Bacon says that in a gentle shower it seemed to him as if the Spirit of the universe descended on him, a comparison both tender and appropriate. Water in all its shapes is a mighty vivifier and purifier, wonderful as ‘we think of it as the source of all the changefulness and beauty which we have seen in clouds, then as the instrument by which the earth we have contemplated was moulded into symmetry, and its crags chiselled into grace; then as, in the form of snow, it robes the mountains it has made with that transcendent light

which we could not have conceived if we had not seen ; then as it exists in the form of the torrent—in the iris which spans it, in the morning mist which rises from it, in the deep crystalline pools which mirror its hanging shore, in the broad lake and glancing river ; finally, in that which is to all human minds the best emblem of unwearied, unconquerable power—the wild, various, fantastic, tameless unity of the sea.’

Every drop of water has its little tide, and every drop has some effect, sometimes leaving marks which have lasted for thousands of years. Impressions of rain-drops are found in the New Red Standstone, in some cases plainly indicating the quarter from which the shower came. Of the bow ‘set in the clouds’ there is no mention in the Song of the Three Children, though we should have expected it to be peculiarly present to a Semitic poet ; but of clouds themselves there is much said. Clouds are connected with some of the most momentous events recorded in Holy Writ. A cloud covered Sinai when Moses ascended it ; a pillar of cloud led the Israelites through the wilderness ; when the Lord took possession of the home of His glory, a radiant cloud filled the sanctuary. It was from a cloud that He spoke at the Transfiguration—‘not a cloud of thick darkness, as at Sinai, but a cloud of light, a Shechinah of radiance’—and a like shining cloud received our Blessed Lord on the first Ascension Day, when sight was changed into faith, showing that henceforward believers must trust to some other power than their own senses, for ‘the

discipleship of light was finished, the discipleship of faith had begun'—with the further lesson, that it is only given to us 'to trace the doings of God to a certain distance, and then comes the cloud.' Again, clouds are connected with an awful scene yet to be enacted. Surely the early Christians, who lived in constant expectation of their Lord's immediate return, could never have looked at the sky without vividly recalling His own words, prophesying that one day the Son of Man should be seen, coming in a cloud, with great glory. Well were it if, when we look on the rose-tinted clouds of dawn, or 'those clouds which far above us float and pause' in the summer sky, or those which, dyed with 'tenderest, brightest hues,' gather around the setting sun, we too thought on that saying! Well may Keble exclaim—

'O may no earthborn cloud arise,
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes!'

There are two great forces which balance and control the operations of the clouds,—a force which separates and constantly disperses them, and another, which bears them up, and prevents the tons of water which they contain from falling in floods to the earth. In one of his lectures Faraday made the startling assertion that in ten rain-drops there was power enough contained to destroy a city.

We may speak of clouds, describe their various regions, their composition, their use, but no words can call up their variety and their loveliness as does a passage

in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, so exquisite that it must be quoted at almost full length : ' Stand upon the peak of some isolated mountain at daybreak, when the night-mists first rise from off the plains, and watch their white and lake-like fields as they float in level bays and winding gulfs about the islanded summits of the lower hills, untouched yet by more than dawn, colder and more quiet than a windless sea under the moon of midnight ; watch when the first sunbeam is sent upon the silver channels, how the foam of their undulating surface parts and passes away ; and down under their depths the glittering city and green pasture lie, like Atlantis, between the white paths of winding rivers ; the flakes of light falling every moment faster and broader among the starry spires, as the wreathed surges break and vanish above them, and the confused crests and ridges of the dark hills shorten their grey shadows upon the plain. Wait a little longer, and you shall see those scattered mists rallying in the ravines, and floating up towards you along the quiet valleys, till they couch in quiet masses, iridescent with the morning light, upon the broad breasts of the higher hills, whose leagues of massy undulation will melt back and back into that robe of material light, until they fade away, lost in its lustre, to appear again above, in the serene heaven, like a wild, bright, impossible dream, foundationless and inaccessible, their very bases vanishing in the unsubstantial and mocking blue of the deep lake below. Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see those mists gather themselves into white towers, and stand like

fortresses along the promontories, massy and motionless, only piled with every instant higher and higher into the sky, and casting longer shadows athwart the rocks; and out of the pale blue of the horizon you will see forming and advancing a troop of narrow, dark, pointed vapours, which will cover the sky inch by inch with their grey network, and take the light off the landscape with an eclipse which will stop the singing of the birds and the motion of the leaves together; and then you will see horizontal bars of black shadow forming under them, and lurid wreaths create themselves, you know not how, along the shoulders of the hills; you never see them form, but when you look back to a place which was clear an instant ago, there is a cloud on it, hanging by the precipices, as a hawk pauses over his prey. . . . And then you will hear the sudden rush of the awakened wind, and you will see those watchtowers of vapour swept away from their foundations, and waving curtains of opaque rain let down to the valleys, swinging from the burdened clouds in black bending fringes, or pacing in pale columns along the lake-level, grazing its surface into foam as they go. And then, as the sun sinks, you shall see the storm drift for an instant from off the hills, leaving their broad sides smoking, and loaded yet with snow-white, torn, straw-like rags of capricious vapour—now gone, now gathered again; while the smouldering sun, seeming not far away, but burning like a red-hot ball beside you, and as if you could reach it, plunges through the rushing wind and rolling cloud with head-

long fall as if it meant to rise no more, dyeing all the air about it with blood. . . . And then you shall see a green halo kindling on the summit of the eastern hills, brighter, brighter yet, till the large white circle of the slow morn is lifted up among the barred clouds. . . . star after star she quenches with her kindling light, setting in their stead an army of pale, penetrable, fleecy wreaths in the heavens to give light upon the earth, which move together, hand in hand, company by company, troop by troop.'

The invocation of wells in the *Benedicite* has a peculiar fitness in the mouth of an Eastern. Wherever the Arab has gone, he marks his track by the wells which he constructs. He has long disappeared from the south of France, but the deep wells with wheel and earthen jars which he bored through the rocky soil yet remain to remind us that Provence and Languedoc were once his domain. 'Build a well and call it by my name,' was the answer of a Hindu, who had saved an English child in the Mutiny, to the parents, who asked what token of their gratitude he would most value. In Palestine, 'the wells,' Dean Stanley tells us, 'serve as the links by which each successive age is bound to the other, in a manner which at first sight would seem almost incredible. The name by which they are called of itself indicates their permanent character. The "well" of the Hebrew and the Arab is carefully distinguished from the "spring." The *spring* (*ain*) is the bright open source, the *eye* of the landscape, such as bubbles up among the crags of Sinai, or rushes forth

in a copious stream from En-gedi or from Jericho. But the *well* (*beer*) is the deep hole *bored* far under the rocky surface by the art of man, the earliest traces of that art which these regions exhibit. By these orifices at the foot of the hills, surrounded by their broad margin of smooth stone or marble, a rough mass of stone covering the top, have always been gathered whatever signs of animation or civilisation the neighbourhood afforded. They were the scenes of the earliest contentions of the shepherd patriarchs with the inhabitants of the land; the places of meeting with the women who came down to draw water from their rocky depths; of Eliezer with Rebecca, of Jacob with Rachel, of Moses with Zipporah, of Christ with the woman of Samaria. They were the natural halting-places of great caravans or wayfaring men, as when Moses gathered together the people to the well of Moab, which the princes dug with their sceptred staves, and therefore the resort of the plunderers of the desert, of "the noise of archers, in the places of drawing water." What they were ages ago in each of these respects they are still. The shepherds may still be seen leading their flocks of sheep and goats to their margin; the women still come with their pitchers, and talk to those "who sit by the well;" the traveller still looks forward to it as his resting-place for the night, if it be in a place of safety, or, if it be in the neighbourhood of the wilder Bedouins, is hurried on by his dragoman or his escort without halting a moment—and thus, by their means, not only is the image of the ancient life of the country preserved, but

the scenes of sacred events are identified, which, under any other circumstances, would have perished. The wells of Beersheba in the wide frontier valley of Palestine are indisputable witnesses of the life of Abraham. The well of Jacob at Shechem is a monument of the earliest and of the latest events of sacred history—of the caution of the prudent patriarch, no less than of the freedom of the Gospel there proclaimed by Christ.'

B'er is usually translated 'well' in our version of the Old Testament; and the names of many places have this word in conjunction with some other, as Beer-elim, 'the well of heroes.' The Latin *forare* and English *bore* both come from this root.

The purity and inestimable value of water has led to fountain, spring, and river being worshipped in an endless variety of forms. Milton alludes to the Greek belief in water-nymphs in his *Comus*. Sabrina, flying from her enemy, falls into the Severn, and there the naiads 'held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,' and she herself becomes goddess of the stream. The Scandinavians and Teutons also worshipped water deities, throwing flowers into streams and fountains, and kindling fires on the banks in their honour. A relic of these customs still exists in some parts of Germany, where auguries are drawn at Christmas by lights held above certain springs and streams. Water-worship was especially forbidden by the laws of Canute and Egbert but laws cannot root out beliefs, and the Saxons long held to their pagan customs, made pilgrimages to holy

wells, now consecrated to some saint, and believed, with a singular mixture of new and old superstition, that at Christmas and Easter well-water turned into wine for a brief space, to perpetuate the recollection of the first miracle at Cana. Even yet this belief lingers in Germany, and still in Hesse youths and maidens on the octave of Easter Day fetch water from a certain mountain spring, carry it home in jugs, and then throw flowers into it. Well-dressing is not quite extinct even yet in England; the Derbyshire folk still deck them with flowers on Ascension Day, arranging the blossoms in various patterns, with beautiful effect, and forming a procession to the well thus honoured. In Milton's time it would appear that some such homage was offered to the Severn, for he describes the shepherds carolling rustic lays, and throwing

‘ Sweet garland wreaths into her stream,
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.’

Wells are often enclosed in churches, as in the cathedrals of Carlisle, St. Patrick's and Ratisbon, and there are others to which sacred traditions cling. Foremost of these is the well in the Mamertine prison in Rome, where a very ancient tradition asserts that St. Peter and St. Paul were confined. Legend declares that the spring which it encloses broke forth miraculously in order to furnish Peter with water wherewith to baptize; and whether we accept this as fact or reject it as fable, we can hardly stand in that dungeon unmoved. It was an ancient belief that a hidden spring often

suddenly revealed itself on some spot rendered holy by the presence of saint or martyr. St. Winifred's Well in Wales is an instance of this, as is St. Ethelbert's, of whose murder old stories still linger in the neighbourhood where Offa of Mercia treacherously slew him. In many cases the water of such wells was supposed to have especial healing powers; and in some places little offerings—perhaps only a pin—are still flung into them, with a vague notion of its bringing good luck, or ill, as the case may be. There was a well in North Wales known as the 'Cursing Well,' which, in the memory of those still living, had its priestess, who wrote in her book the names of those whom some enemy wished to curse; gold was paid for this privilege, and so strong was the belief in the result, that people were known to waste away and die on learning that their names were down in the fatal book. Nay, if any one ill-wished his neighbour's cow or horse, it was held sufficient to draw a sketch of the animal and throw it in the well. This evil well was again and again stopped up by order of the magistrates, but always was found to have been cleared out again under cover of night. Of course a bribe would insure the removal of a name from the book of the priestess.

Mightiest of all the forms which water takes are those seas and floods which the *Benedicite* invokes. 'The floods have lift up, O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice,' says the Psalmist, with a profound feeling of the grandeur of that mighty ocean which Victor Hugo has likened to the deep and ceaseless moan of humanity.

The Hebrew poet could see from every hill-top in Palestine the blue and flashing waves of that sea which, as it has been truly observed, calls up more historical memories than any other spectacle. 'I was looking upon the Mediterranean,' says a recent traveller; 'it was the first time those haunted waters had met my gaze. I pondered on the name—the Mediterranean—as if the very letters had folded in their little characters the secret of my joy. My inner eye roved in and out along the coasts of religious Spain, the land of an eternal crusade, where alone, and for that reason, the true religiousness of knighthood was ever realised; it overleaped the Straits, and followed the outline of St. Augustine's lands, where Carthage was and rich Cyrene; onward it went to "old hushed Egypt," the symbol of spiritual darkness and the mystical house of bondage; from thence to Jaffa, from Jaffa to Beyrout, the birthplace of the Morning, the land of the world's pilgrimage, where the Tomb is, lay stretched out like a line of light, and the nets were drying on the rocks of Tyre; onward still, along that large projection of Asia, the field ploughed and sown by apostolic husbandmen; then came a rapid glance upon the little Ægean islands, and upward through the Hellespont; and over the Sea of Marmora St. Sophia's minaret sparkled like a star; the sea surges were faint in the myriad bays of Greece, and that other peninsula, twice the throne of the world's masters, was beautiful in her peculiar twilight.'

But that tideless Mediterranean, which for a time was

the highway of the world; 'the sea of gloom,' as our ancestors called the Atlantic; the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean, and the great island-studded Pacific, are only parts of that vast ocean whose level would hardly be raised were the Andes themselves thrown into its depths. This vast body of water covers nearly three-fourths of the globe. 'A single glance over the map shows us at once,' as Dr. Hartwig remarks, 'how very unequally water and land are distributed. In one part we see continent and islands closely grouped together, while in another the sea widely spreads in one unbroken plain; here vast peninsulas stretch far away into the domains of ocean, while there immense gulfs plunge deeply into the bosom of the land. At first sight it might appear as if blind chance had presided over this distribution, but a nearer view convinces us that providential laws have established the existing relations between the solid and fluid surfaces of the earth. If the sea had been much smaller, or if the greatest mass of land had been concentrated in the tropical zone, all the meteorological phenomena on which the existence of actual organic life depends would have been so different that it is *doubtful* whether man could then have existed, and *certain* that, under those altered circumstances, he never would have attained his present state of civilisation. The dependence of our intellectual development upon the existing configuration of the earth convinces us that Divine wisdom, and not chaotic anarchy, has from all eternity presided over the destinies of our planet.'

The depth of the ocean is as yet unknown ; the Pacific has been but little examined ; the Atlantic bed is much better known ; it deepens between Sierra Leone and Cape San Roque, and a great valley divides near the West Indies into two branches, one running parallel with Africa and Europe, while the other runs up toward Newfoundland. In one part the sounding-line descends 18,000 feet, with huge mountain walls higher than any Alpine precipice. The North Sea is cold and shallow, as is the Adriatic, but there are parts of the Adriatic where the line goes down 6000 feet. The sea-bottom is as varied as the earth, and the quantity of water contained in the ocean is as incalculable as the sand upon its shores.

Sea-water has a blue tinge, perceptible only when light has passed through a considerable depth of it. The famous Grotto of Capri, 'so darkly, deeply, beautifully blue,' owes its singular hue to light having to pass through a great depth of water before it is reflected back from the bottom of the cave. From the sandy bottom of the North Sea a green light is reflected upward. The deep red of the Bay of Loanga arises from the colour of the ground, while the Red Sea owes its shade to a very small seaweed which floats on it ; the Black Sea obtains its name from its storms, not its colour.

'The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly,' but they are equally governed by laws as any other power of the Lord. Currents and waves are both produced by winds, and these again are ruled by solar

heat. The north-east course of the gigantic Gulf Stream may be traced to the south-east trade-wind being stronger, owing to the cooler atmosphere which it blows in, than is the north-east trade-wind. The effect of this mighty current may be estimated when we recollect that England is in the same atmosphere as Labrador, and but for the Gulf Stream would be equally frozen. It serves a double purpose, for the heat which it carries away reduces the temperature of the Tropics, as well as heightening that of colder regions. But what then is wave-motion as distinct from a current? If we throw a bit of wood into a current, it is carried steadily on; but if it is flung into the waves, it is carried on very little, or, if the tide be ebbing, actually floats out to sea, though waves are rushing on the shore. The wave theory, then, is that 'the force of the wind, pushing a given mass of water out of its place into another, dislodges the original occupant, which is again pushed forward on the occupant of the next place, and so on. . . . Wave-motion is in fact the transference of motion without the transference of matter; of form without the substance, of force without the agent.'

No wonder that even to trust one's-self to the 'wrathful Adriatic,' and still more to the sullen Atlantic, was looked on in Classic times as almost tempting the gods; and that the Greek mariner never willingly lost sight of land; or that the departure of a fleet of fishing-boats even now is consecrated in some places by a religious ceremony. In the fishing villages of Western Flanders

the boats start on St. Peter's Day, adorned with flowers, that of the pastor leading the way, while he prays from his deck, and sprinkles holy water upon that sea which too surely will claim one or more victims before all the vessels return again.

From Homer downwards poets have written of the sea, whether flashing with 'the many-twinkling smile of ocean,' 'so darkly, deeply, beautifully blue,' 'fair green fields of the sea that yield no pasture,' and innumerable other phases ; but no invocation is sweeter or more touching than that of a poetess too much forgotten, Mrs. Hemans :—

'What hidest thou in thy treasure caves and cells,
 Thou hollow-sounding and mysterious main?—
 Pale glistening pearls, and rainbow-coloured shells,
 Bright things which gleam unrecked of and in vain !
 Keep, keep thy riches, melancholy sea !
 We ask not such from thee.

Yet more ! The depths have more ! What wealth untold
 Far down and shining through their stillness lies !
 Thou hast the starry gems, the burning gold
 Won from ten thousand royal argosies.
 Sweep o'er thy spoils, thou wild and wrathful main !
 Earth claims not *these* again.

Yet more ! The billows and the depths have more !
 High hearts and brave are gathered to thy breast.
 They hear not now the booming waters roar,
 The battle thunder will not break their rest.
 Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave !
 Give back the true and brave !

Give back the lost and lovely ! those for whom
 The place was kept at board and hearth so long !
 The prayer went up through midnight's breathless gloom,
 And the vain yearning woke 'mid festal song.

Hold fast thy buried isles, thy towers o'erthrown—
But all is not thine own.

To thee the love of woman has gone down ;
Dark flow thy tides o'er manhood's noble head,
O'er youth's bright locks and beauty's flowery crown ;
Yet must thou hear a voice—Restore the dead !
Earth shall reclaim her precious things from thee ;
Restore the dead, thou sea !'

The sea is always in Scripture an image of disquiet and unrest, and therefore we are told that in the New Jerusalem there shall be none, and although St. John saw one before the Throne in vision, it lay motionless and clear as glass.

In ice, and snow, and frost we have another form of water, less familiar to an Eastern, but still known to him, and bidden with all other created things to praise and magnify their Creator.

In the Book of Wisdom the hope of the unthankful is compared to 'the winter's hoar-frost,' and 'He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes,' says the Psalmist. The nights of Palestine are often bitter, and it is a pathetic touch in St. John's Gospel which tells us that, to add to our Saviour's other trials, 'it was cold.' To the northern mind frost appeared both as a mighty giant and as the material from which Ymir, 'the first begotten' was formed. The giants were called *primthursar*, and our word *rime*, or light hoar-frost, comes from this root. These giants were ever hankering for beauteous Asgard, where the gods dwelt, and seeking to conquer it, for in their land there is bleak winter all the year round. There is a graceful description of frost in a

northern clime given in a poetical epistle written by Ambrose Phillips, from Copenhagen, in 1709, to the Earl of Dorset :—

‘For every shrub and every blade of grass,
And every pointed thorn seemed wrought in glass;
In pearls and rubies rich the hawthorns show,
While through the ice the crimson berries glow. . . .
The spreading oak, the beech, and towering pine
Glazed over, in the freezing ether shine.’

Readers of Dante will recollect his grim description of the lake whose frozen surface liker seemed to glass than water, where ‘blue pinched and shrined in ice the spirits stood,’ the tears freezing between their eyes. But to the writer of the *Benedicite*, if a native of Palestine, snow could only suggest refreshing images, whether he thought of it on the lofty summit of Lebanon, slowly melting during the heat of summer, to feed the springs and fountains of that range of hills, and keep up the verdure of those plains, or as crowning Mount Hermon. ‘The eye marvelleth at the beauty of the whiteness thereof, and the heart is astonished at the raining of it,’ says the author of *Ecclesiasticus*; and how many hearts have thrilled to the comparison, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, yet shall they be as white as snow!’ There is something unearthly in the spotless whiteness of new-fallen snow. ‘That would do for the great white throne of God,’ said a little child to her mother, as she looked awestruck on the noble Jungfrau. Almost the same words are used by the author of *Bible Teachings in Nature*, when describing an hour spent by him at sunset on the side

of Mont Blanc, above the highest point of which a golden cloud rested like a diadem. Every ledge and crevasse that afforded the slightest resting-place was laden with snow, and 'the reflection of the rosy hues in the western heavens upon' Mont Blanc 'was exquisitely beautiful. It looked like an enormous, intensely illuminated crimson flower held up in Nature's white fingers for the sun's dying blessing. . . . The whole scene seemed an awful white realm of mystery and death.' Still more truly might this be said of the glacier world, wherever those mighty seas of ice are found, whether amid the mountains or frozen into huge icebergs, 'floating by, as green as emerald.'

Glacier ice differs from common ice both in structure and composition. Instead of being composed of one united, transparent mass, it lies in strata, banded with blue and white, and is a collection of grains, with minute air-bubbles between them. A block of such ice exposed to the air in a sheltered place grows both larger and lighter; it absorbs moisture, but parts with certain gases. If covered with any substance which excludes air, it does not alter. There is a constant influence of the atmosphere on a glacier; it moves, so to say, and breathes; water percolates it in summer, and freezes within its depths in winter, thus making up for the water produced by the sun's heat. These ice seas are the sources whence descend the great rivers of the world, but their own water is not drinkable; though fresh and pure, it only increases thirst; but a piece of glacier ice which has flowed over a stone will have

imbibed carbonic acid, and is as refreshing as that of any stream.

The glacier itself is death to vegetation ; the chamois avoids it, birds will not fly over it ; but when it comes down far into a valley, as at Grindelwald, it appears to stimulate growth. The beautiful little gentian lifts its small, intensely blue flowers almost on its edge ; two kinds of saxifrage, and the bright *Silene acaulis*, with the ranunculus of the glacier, blossom all but in the snow, together with many other species. Sir Joseph Hooker found knapweeds and wormwood amid snow and ice in Thibet, and a saxifrage was gathered on Chimborazo 600 feet above the snow-line ! Still higher grow mosses and lichens. Though ice is fatal to vegetation, snow protects it, keeping frost out of the ground. Its white colour comes from the combination of prismatic rays issuing from tiny crystals. The flakes are seen under a microscope to be usually six-pointed stars, incredibly various and beautiful. It is said that the crystals of hoar-frost vary according to the tree or shrub on which they are formed, each having its own peculiar kind, but all lovely and pure. This purity of snow makes it naturally the favourite emblem of innocence, and it was long remembered by Royalists that when the body of Charles I. was borne to burial, though the sky was clear when it was first carried out, 'presently it began to snow, and fell so fast,' reports an eye-witness, with tender satisfaction, that by the 'time they came to the west end of the Royal Chappell the black velvet pall was all white (y^e colour of innocence),

being thick covered over with snow. So went the White King to his burial.'

In the Arctic regions it is Nature who has reared 'winter's eternal palace,' built by Time,' but Cowper in his 'Winter Morning Walk' describes one constructed of the same material to gratify an imperial caprice :—

'Silently as a dream the fabric rose ;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon enjoined, no other cement asked
Than water interfused to make them one.'

This ice palace was made of blocks of ice from the Neva, by order of the Empress Anna, in 1740. The Neva is the scene of a great religious festival each year, when the Epiphany comes round. A chapel is erected over a space broken in the ice, and a great procession, in which the Czar, his courtiers, and all the great Church dignitaries appear, takes place, bearing banners, candles, and an immense cross, which is immersed in the river while mass is performed. The Czar then kisses the hand of the Metropolitan, who blesses and sprinkles him with holy water, after which he asperses those around with a sprig of rosemary dipped into a cup which is borne before him. At Belgrade also, at the Epiphany, the Metropolitan and clergy go in procession from the Cathedral to the river-side, bearing a cross cut out of ice,—and salvoes of cannon are fired from the fortress while the water is blessed.

Besides the well-known legend of St. Wenceslas, there is another connected with ice. A poor man, it runs, received him into his cottage in Nuremberg, whither he was accustomed to go to teach his converts. One winter night there was no wood wherewith to make a fire, and the saint bade his host bring the icicles hanging from the eaves of the house, prayed over them, and made the sign of the cross; and when the poor man held a torch to them, they kindled into flame. There is a bas-relief of this miracle on the wonderful Sebald shrine in his noble church at Nuremberg. A third tradition is commemorated in a charming little painting by Meinling, found in the celebrated breviary kept in the palaces of the Doges, and illustrates the office of 'Our Lady of the Snow.' A slender figure represents the Virgin, clad in pale blue bordered with gold; she holds the Holy Child, and is seated in a meadow dotted with flowers, while in the distance appears the procession of priests pausing in the midst of the snow, which has fallen from heaven in the height of summer, tracing on the grass the form of the church which a vision has commanded should be built to her honour.

CHAPTER IV.

The Powers of the Lord.

Powers of the Lord—Kingsley on laws of nature—Maurice on earthquake of Lisbon—Sun and moon—Light—Haydn's *Creation*—Meaning of Hebrew word 'lights' in Genesis—Helmholz on light—Return of sunshine to the Arctic regions—Jeremy Taylor on sunrise—Gay—St. Francis of Assisi's *Cantico del Sole*—Sun-worship among Peruvians, Slavonians, Celts, Teutons—Broome on the moon—Moon no copy of earth—Olaf Winckler on moon scenery—Brief notice of the creation of stars in Genesis—Stanley on 'Science and Religion'—Addison—Orion and the Pleiades—*Chimah*—*Bible Teachings from Nature*—Astrology—Keble on stars—Days and nights—Mrs. Barrett Browning on sleep—Animals and plants—Night in the desert—Winter and summer—Old customs—Whewell on length of seasons—Fire—St. Polycarp—Emblem of spiritual life—Fire-worship—Lightning—Psalm of the Seven Thunders—Wind the emblem of the Holy Spirit—Daniel's vision—Wind, how used as a symbol in the Bible—Milton's 'felon winds'—Shakespeare, Shelley, Kingsley, Tusser on winds—Art only able to show *effect* of wind.

'THE heavens and all the *powers* therein,' we find the *Te Deum* proclaiming, and the word is also strikingly used in St. Paul's noble hymn of praise, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he exclaims in a burst of triumphant praise that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor aught created shall be able to separate us from the love of God. The exact meaning of the word as used in the

Benedicite may be disputed ; but whether we take it as applied to angels who carry out God's commands—such powers as St. John saw in vision about to smite the sinful earth, or such messengers as the one who passed over the camp of the Assyrians, 'and breathed in the face of the foe as he passed,' or such as struck Herod when he accepted the adulation of those who proclaimed his speech that of a god—or whether we take the word to signify all the mighty forces, moral and spiritual, which work God's will, the invocation is equally appropriate. The powers of the Lord, whether animate or incarnate, minister to the wants of man, and are wielded by God Himself. Man can meddle but little with them. In only a small degree will they ever be subject to him, but all work in God's hand for his good. The minds of many are troubled as to whether it can be right to pray against calamities, such as cholera, sent by God, and governed, as they truly say, by His unchanging laws. It can never be wrong to pray that He will show us mercy, and not be extreme to mark what is done amiss ; but at the same time we should entreat that our eyes may be opened to perceive why the chastisement has come, and how we may learn to extirpate the evil against which we pray, and avoid the sins of selfishness, moral blindness, and idleness which have brought it upon us, as at once a punishment, and as a merciful warning and stimulus to do better. There is a passage in one of Kingsley's sermons bearing directly upon this. 'The Psalmist,' he says, 'would have gone back to a certain old story, . . .

and have said, "Whatever I know or do not know about the laws of nature, this I know—that God can use them as He chooses, to punish the wicked and to help the miserable. For He did so by my forefathers. When we Jews were a poor, small, despised tribe of slaves in Egypt, the God who made heaven and earth showed Himself at once the God of nature and the God of grace. For He took the powers of nature, and fought with them against proud Pharaoh and all his hosts, and showed that they belonged to Him, and that He could handle them all to do His work. He showed that He was Lord, not only of the powers of nature which give life and health, but of those which give death and disease. Nothing was too grand, nothing was too mean for Him to use. He took the lightning, and the hail, and the pestilence, and the darkness, and the east wind, and the spring-tides of the Red Sea, and He took also the locust swarms, and the frogs, and the lice, and the loathsome skin diseases of Egypt, and the microscopic atomies which turn whole rivers into blood, and kill the fish, and with them He fought against Pharaoh, the man-god, the tyrant ruling at his own will in the name of his father the sun-god and of the powers of nature, till Egypt was destroyed, and Pharaoh's host drowned in the sea; and He brought out my forefathers with a mighty hand, and an out-stretched arm, because He heard their cry in Egypt, and saw their oppression under cruel taskmasters, and pitied them, and had mercy on them in their slavery and degradation. That is my God," the old Psalmist

would have said. Not merely a strong God or a wise God, but a good God and a gracious God, and a just God likewise—a God who not only made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is, but who keepeth His promise for ever ; who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong, and who feedeth the hungry.’ And Maurice, speaking of that tremendous calamity, the earthquake of Lisbon, follows a similar train of thought when he writes : ‘ It is surely some help and comfort to believe that whenever a natural calamity of this kind occurs—at least whenever men are the victims of it, there is a moral derangement which needs to be removed, and which God is seeking to remove. If the earthquake of Lisbon swept away hundreds and thousands, of whom we cannot pronounce that they were worse than we are, at least we may hear in it a voice denouncing those same sins which brought death upon Korah and his company : the ambition and falsehood of priests leading to the unbelief, sensuality, godlessness of a people. It was a handwriting on the wall, addressed to all Europe.’

Among these ‘ powers of the Lord ’ we may assuredly count those next invoked in the Song of the Three Children—the sun and moon. The Hebrew word which describes the making of the two great lights to rule the firmament means literally that the sun was crowned ruler, to give light to the earth. ‘ By the time,’ writes the author of *The Supernatural in Nature*, ‘ earth and water were separated, and dense vaporous clouds rarefied, the earth’s mass attained a measure of con-

solidation, and began to exhibit vital power in lowest forms of vegetable organisms ; the sun, clearing the photosphere, sent rays of light and heat through the vast pressure of his own vapours, and became lord of the day.'

A lord and ruler indeed ! ' He draws to himself all such cosmical matter and bodies as come under his exclusive influence, either by leaving the domain of some other star, or on account of his own motion through space. Those do not all remain with him ; but, after paying their respects, return to the sidereal depths, to be attendants on other suns and stars, to perform functions in many worlds. Around him are millions of millions of bodies of varying velocities in different directions ; clouds of cosmical atoms shifting and changing ; aggregating here, segregating there ; but, as a clustering solar appendage, permanent, an aureola of tremendous dimensions and startling magnificence. . . . By the exercise of his mighty attractive influence he controls the forces which would drive planets and meteors far out into space from the influence of his lighting, heating, actinic influence. So perfect his government, that the processes of slow change take place within limits, and the continual variations produce permanence in paths ever varying around him. . . . In one sense the sun's influence includes all space, but for practical purposes we regard it as limited and definite. . . . The sun rules all the vapour of our atmosphere, lifting it up, then casting it down as rain and snow. The mechanical power of every river

in the world, the energy of the winds, the growth of trees and vegetables, the support of animal life are all from him. The blood in our veins—that oil of the lamp of life, the work of our muscles, the oxidation which supports the heart's action—without which it would be utterly consumed by its own action in eight days, prove that we are children of the sun. In tracing out all these powers to their source, we come to one power—the sun. He is the natural agent, and it is as easy for men to see the providence of God in the natural ordering of the world as in startling and miraculous occurrences.'

It would lead us much too far were we to speak at any length of the wondrous solar ray, and of those light-waves which travel with such inconceivable rapidity that a beam requires only one second of time to traverse 190,000 miles, a rate exceeding more than ten million times the velocity of the swiftest express train. 'From hundreds of suns at once the light-waves pour in upon the small circle of the eye pupil, and they come in perfect order and regularity, as rollers which have traversed a wide sea pour in upon a level shore. From some among the fainter stars these waves have been travelling hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. Yet still they flow on, in perfect uniformity, as when they first left their parent sun. So small are these waves that the breadth of from forty to sixty thousand of them would occupy but a single inch.'

It was with the aim of expressing light through

musical sounds that Handel wrote his 'O first created beam,' an attempt also grandly made by Haydn in his oratorio of the *Creation*, where the recitation of the archangel Raphael, 'In the beginning . . . darkness was upon the face of the deep,' is followed by a soft chorus, 'And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' after which comes the strongly accented passage, 'And God said, Let there be light, and there was light,' with a grand outburst of sound on the last word. In Handel's *Israel in Egypt* the chorus 'And He sent a thick darkness' is extraordinarily effective, creating the shuddering sensation of terror and helplessness amid absolute gloom to a degree which can only be believed by those who have heard the oratorio worthily performed. And what preacher could speak as eloquently on the words of Isaiah, 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon them has the light shined,' as does Handel in music?

The Hebrew word for *lights* in the first chapter of Genesis implies that the sun was not light itself, but an instrument or vessel for holding it, a view confirmed by science, but which, if known to the writer of that book, could only have been revealed by Divine wisdom.

'In nebulous sphere,' says Helmholtz, 'just become luminous, and in red-hot liquid earth of our own cosmogony, light was not yet divided into sun and stars, nor time into day and night, as it was after the earth was cooled.' We are told that the sun was *made* on the fourth day; but this must be understood, not as

of creating that matter which, when drawn together out of space, formed the sun and other planets, but as meaning that the two great rulers of the firmament then appeared as we see them.

‘ And forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep ; and from her native east
To journey through the æëry gloom began,
Sphered in a radiant cloud, for yet the sun
Was not : she in a cloudy tabernacle
Sojourn’d the while,’

wrote Milton, as accurately as poetically.

The fact of this pre-creation is implied in the first verse of Genesis.

We are apt to associate the sun with ‘the clime of the east,’ but perhaps nowhere is the full beauty of its rising better seen than in the Arctic regions. How wonderfully welcome the sight must be after the long winter ! It is thus described by a traveller, who had not seen it for nearly one hundred and fifty days :—

‘The summits of the hills were bathed in its glorious light, while its luminous beams danced and glimmered along the distant floes. It was a bright and glorious sight, and we remained long admiring it and revelling in its rays, until warned by a peculiar sensation in our feet that the temperature was actually 100° below freezing-point.’

In a higher strain Bishop Jeremy Taylor writes : ‘When the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds

the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns like those that decked the brow of Moses when he was forced to wear a veil because himself had seen the face of God ; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a full, fair light, and a face ; and then he shines one whole day—under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly ; so is a man's reason and his life.' Thus the sun goes on 'his golden pilgrimage,' the 'unwearied minister of light,' and then, as we say in defiance of science, and probably always shall say, he sets, to illuminate other lands, as Gay has described in his 'Contemplation on Night :'

'When to the western main the sun descends,
To other lands a rising day he lends ;
The spreading dawn another shepherd spies,
The wakeful flocks from their warm folds arise ;
While we in sleep's embraces waste the night,
The climes opposed enjoy meridian light ;
And when those lands the busy sun forsakes,
With us again the rosy morning wakes.'

Perhaps one of the most beautiful poetic allusions to sunset is found in Wordsworth's

'A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.'

The gentle Saint of Assisi composed a canticle, in which the sun is especially celebrated. 'It was,' says Mrs. Oliphant, 'after one of his long fasts, when

his spirit, entranced by contemplation of Divine things, had risen into an ecstatic sense of the greatness of God and the beauty of His world, that he desired Brother Leonard to take a pen, and to write, upon which he chanted the Canticle of the Sun. After he had thus improvised, he desired Brother Pacifico, who in the world had been a poet, to reduce the words into a rhythm more exact, and commanded that the brethren should learn them by heart, in order to recite them every day.'

Music has attempted to depict the sunrise. In Haydn's *Creation* there is a musical picture of the rising sun—the slow swell of the instruments in ascending notes describing how the orb of day gradually mounts upward, while its full brilliancy is expressed by the full power of the orchestra. In modern art the painter has delighted to give the various effects of sunrise 'kissing the mountain-top,' or lighting plain and woodland; but perhaps none have rendered them so exquisitely with the brush as has the poet Beattie in one line—

'Lo, the sun appears, and heaven, earth, ocean smile.'

We cannot wonder at the prevalence of sun-worship. Zeus and Jupiter, Baal and Ra, India and Odin were all personifications of the sun; and in the other hemisphere also we find a complete system of sun-worship. 'Our northern nations,' says Helps, in his *Spanish Conquest of America*, 'can hardly comprehend how the sun and the moon and the stars were imaged in the mind of a Peruvian, and dwelt there; how the changes in these luminaries were combined with all

his feelings and his fortunes ; how the dawn was hope to him ; how the fierce midday brightness was power to him ; how the declining sun was death to him ; and how the new morning was a resurrection to him : nay more, how the sun and the moon and the stars were his personal friends as well as his deities ; how he held communion with them, and thought that they regarded every act and word ; how in his solitude he fondly imagined that they sympathised with him, and how, with outstretched arms, he appealed to them against their own unkindness, or against the injustice of his fellow-man.

‘It must not be supposed that the sun alone absorbed the devotion of the Peruvians ; there was little in nature that they did not continue to make a deity of. The moon, as the spouse of the sun ; the planet Venus, as his page the Pleiades, and the remarkable constellation of the Southern Cross, were minor deities. The rainbow and lightning were also worshipped as servants of the sun.’

To the Slavonians the sun appeared as a woman stepping into her bath at night, and rising refreshed at dawn, and the sea as a mother, into whose arms the sun sinks to sleep ; but it is probable that at first these were only metaphors, which passed into legends.

The Celts carried sun-worship wherever they immigrated, and though with a different mythology, both Celts and Teutons kept the feast of the winter solstice, which took its name from Heol or Hiaul, dialectic varieties of the word which we know as Yule. Upon

this heathen festival was ingrafted the great feast of Christmas, the anniversary of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon a dark world. Both Teutons and Celts also celebrated the midsummer solstice by bonfires, processions with lighted torches, and by blazing wheels, unmistakable emblems of the sun, which Indian mythology calls the 'golden wheel of heaven,' a name which occurs also in the Edda.

Notwithstanding the all-importance of the sun, the moon, 'the governess of floods,' is more familiar to us, more our friend, better known in the various phases, which have been gracefully described by Broome, a poet of the last century.

'By Thy command the moon, as daylight fades,
Lifts her broad circle in the deepening shades ;
Arrayed in glory and enthroned in light,
She breaks the solemn terrors of the night ;
Sweetly inconstant in her varying flame,
She changes still, another, yet the same.
Now in decrease by slow degrees she shrouds
Her fading lustre in a veil of clouds ;
Now of increase, her gathering beams display
A blaze of light, and give a paler day.'

Moon myths are numerous, and it would be vain to attempt to mention one-quarter of what poets have said of her ; there are over one hundred and fifty allusions to her in Shakespeare alone. But no myth or poet's dream can equal or approach the mysterious awe which is felt on learning that this shining orb which rolls through the dark blue depths is a dead world. She is no copy of earth, for seas and rivers, clouds, atmosphere

and seasons are all absent. The lunar sky must be black as the shadows which its mountains throw upon its broad plains. What there may be on that side which we never see it is impossible to say, but even if that be habitable, it must be by creatures quite unlike ourselves.

The surface visible to us is convulsed and upturned and rugged; no storms wear those sharp edges, no water smooths them; but strange and perplexing changes occur, for now and then astronomers miss some crater which they had only a little while before distinguished.

Huge solitary rocks stand scattered over the grey flats which lie among vast mountains, that often rise into peaks sharper than the Matterhorn or the Pic d'Ossau in the Pyrenees, while the whole surface is full of craters, some of which must be far larger than the famous Kilauea and Haleakala of the Sandwich Islands, others like pits with a great entrenchment round them. We cannot tell whether any kind of vegetation can exist in the moon, nor what the colours of its soil may be, but the singular brilliancy of certain parts of her surface seems to suggest chalk or snowy granite, such as composes some of the highest peaks of the Himalayan range.

A picture of singular interest was exhibited some years ago in London, painted by Olaf Winckler, who devoted nearly fifty years to the careful scrutiny of the moon, by the aid of powerful telescopes endeavouring to realise with scientific accuracy the various aspects of

its scenery. Thus is it described : 'It is evening : the spectator is standing on the steep side of one of the chains of mountains in the moon which encircle a great crater plain. The sun, which is setting out of sight, turns the lofty peaks into molten metal, so intense is the light. The rest of the dreary landscape is in dull earth-shine, and the earth itself, partly lit up by the sun, is seen, moon-like, sailing through the heavens.'

As the moon does not possess any atmosphere, space is black, and the earth and the stars look red and round and aglow with heat, 'and there was something very awful in the contrast between the brightness of the earth and the blackness of the space it floated in.'

'He made the stars also' is the one brief passing record in which the author of Genesis sums up, in his account of the fourth day of creation, the birth of those mighty systems, each almost a universe in itself. Neither the gifted seer who wrote that, nor he, the royal Psalmist, who wrote that glorious hymn which speaks of the heavens declaring the glory of God, had any—even the faintest—insight into the wonders which the telescope has disclosed.

The heavenly bodies were not to them enormous masses of worlds, millions of miles away, millions of ages old, but bright flashing fires, kindled for the first time to illuminate the darkness of the freshly-created earth. It was not the Divine will that the chosen people should be premature astronomers or premature

geologists. Other and nobler truths than these were committed to the race of Israel—not the wisdom concerning man and God—not, as Baronius quaintly but wisely says, ‘the revelation of how the earth goeth, but the revelation of how we must go to heaven.’

Thus writes Dean Stanley in a sermon on ‘Science and Religion,’ and we may also quote a striking passage from an older writer, who says: when we survey the whole earth at once, and the several planets that lie within its neighbourhood, we are filled with a pleasing astonishment to see so many worlds hanging one above another, and sliding round their axles in such an amazing pomp and solemnity.

‘If after this we contemplate those wide fields of ether, that reach in height from Saturn to the fixed stars, and run abroad almost an infinitude, our imagination finds its capacity filled with so immense a prospect, and puts itself upon the stretch to comprehend it. But if we yet rise higher, and consider the fixed stars as so many vast oceans of flame that are each of them attended with a different set of planets, and still discover new firmaments and new lights that are sunk further in those unfathomable depths of ether, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our telescopes, we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and are confounded with the immensity and magnificence of Nature.’

Thus says Addison, needing no modern discoveries to enable him to feel the greatness of the heavens, and recognising the truth that ‘when we have measured the

distances and weighed the masses of the heavenly bodies, when we have tested by the spectroscope the materials of the sun and stars, we are still on the outside of things;’ and that, as the Duke of Argyll has well observed, ‘every answered question brings into view another unanswered, and perhaps unanswerable, lying close behind it.’

Few stars are mentioned by name in the Scriptures, but the name of Orion and the Pleiades appears more than once. To the eyes of Job, gazing on them in their wonderful radiance above the plains of Mesopotamia, they must have had a magnificence which we can but faintly imagine, to whom the ‘seven stars’ look only like ‘fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.’ The Arabs thought of Orion as ‘the giant’—perhaps Nimrod, bound in the sky for his impiety, with his two dogs and a hare to attend him in neighbouring constellations. It has been suggested that this legend is alluded to in the words, ‘Canst thou loose the bands of *cesil*?’ or ‘the giant.’ But *cesil* may also mean Sirius or Canopus, and besides, it seems most unlikely that God, speaking to Job, should allude to a fabled story. The three glittering stars in Orion’s belt were marked by all European nations.

In Scandinavia they were known as ‘Frigga’s robe,’ but after the introduction of Christianity they became the ‘robe of Mary’ or ‘Jacob’s staff;’ and again in the Middle Ages, as Frigga had had to make way for Mary, Jacob had to transfer his staff to St. Peter. To the warlike Esthonians the three stars occurred as a

glittering spear, while the love of the Anglo-Saxons for the chase made the whole constellation into a troop of wild boars. In Greece the hunting myth appears again, and Orion is the handsome huntsman, who weds Eos, the dawn, and the gods, wrathful at her alliance with a mortal, caused Artemis to slay him with her arrows. The Pleiades gained their Greek name from *Plein*, 'to sail,' because by their rising and setting was calculated the period when the timid Greek mariner, who never willingly lost sight of land, might venture to launch his vessel; their Latin name of *Vergiliæ* was connected with *Ver*, 'spring.' According to the Grecian legend, they were seven daughters of Atlas, who were all united to gods, except Merope, who wedded a mortal, and whose star therefore is dim and faint.

On a clear moonless night, however, several more stars can be perceived in the cluster, and an ordinary telescope reveals nearly a hundred.

The Pleiades are strikingly alluded to, together with Orion and the Bear, in the Book of Job. Delitsch thus translates the passage:—

'Canst thou join the twistings of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

'Canst thou bring forth the signs of the Zodiac (Mazzaroth) at the right time? and canst thou guide the Bear with its children?

'Knowest thou the laws of heaven?

'Or dost thou define its influence on the earth?'

The Persians compare the Pleiades to a bouquet of

jewels, and the verse in Job which speaks of them might also be translated 'Canst thou not arrange together the diamond chain of the Pleiades?' Some have seen in the Hebrew word *chimah*, 'a band'—or, as Macmillan in *Bible Teachings from Nature* takes it, 'a hinge'—an allusion to Alcyone, that star in this group which it seems probable is the central sun of our system. If so, this again must have been a scientific truth suggested by inspiration to the unconscious lips of the Patriarch. St. Augustine, commenting on this mention of the Pleiades and Orion in the Book of Job, observes that under their names God comprehends all the rest of the stars, and that the argument is that the Almighty alone regulates the seasons, and that no mortal can meddle with them nor scan the decrees of God. The Bear, or Arcturus, as our translation has it, is called in Hebrew *aish*, or bier, from the shape of the constellation; it is still so called in Syria. The four chief stars form the bier, and the three smaller are the mourning children who attend it.

Among all the fancies which men have connected with the stars, there is none so poetical as that of the music of the spheres. 'There's not an orb,' says Shakespeare,

'But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring with the young-eyed cherubin :
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But, while this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.'

Or, as a heathen teacher beautifully puts it, they move perpetually because they cannot rest for longing to be

absorbed in God, but they move in harmony because they do so according to His will. According to the Pythagorean philosophy, the whole life of man should be an attempt to reproduce on earth the beauty and harmony displayed in the order of the universe. That the stars influenced man's destiny is a most ancient belief, and for centuries the science of predicting the fortunes of men by astrology was held to be a far higher one than that of astronomy. Astrology prevailed in the earliest times among Eastern nations, whence it passed to the West, and we find the unfailing good sense of Horace rebuking Leuconoe for her belief in 'Chaldean numbers.' In far later times even great astronomers like Kepler and Tycho Brahe could not bring themselves quite to disbelieve in it; and many passages in our older writers cannot be understood without some knowledge of the terms used in astrology. Some of them are still in use, though their original force is lost. 'Ill-starred' is an expression familiar to us all, though it does not convey at all what it did formerly. 'Born under happy stars' wrote Spenser, with a much fuller perception of the allusion. One well-known author, at least, in our own times studied this old-world science—Bulwer Lytton,—and there is a very curious account of his drawing the horoscope of Disraeli given in the Biography lately published by his son.

Lovely as our own starlight nights are, they cannot compare to those of more genial lands, such as Italy; and how their beauty struck the Grecian poet we may

see from a passage in the *Iliad*, exquisitely rendered by Tennyson—

‘ The stars about the moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting peak,
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart.’

And if we would quote from some modern poet in praise of the stars, surely we cannot do better than give the poem, too little known, of Keble :—

“ More and more stars ! And ever as I gaze
Brighter and brighter seen.
Whence come they, father ? Trace me out their ways
Far in the deep serene.”
“ My child, these eyes of mine but faintly show
One step on earth below :
And even our wisest may but dream, they say,
Of what is done on high by yon empyreal ray.

Thou knowest at deepening twilight how afar,
On heath or mountain down,
The shepherds kindle many an earthly star ;
How from the low, damp town
We through the mist the lines of twilight trace,
In dwellings proud or base :
But whom they light, what deeds and words are there,
We know but this alone—’Tis well if all be prayer.

Whether on lonely shades the pale sad ray
From a sick-chamber fall,
Or amid thousands more beam glad and gay
From mirthful bower or hall ;
If pure the joy, and patient be the woe,
Heaven’s breath is there, we know :
And surely of yon lamps on high we deem,
As of pure worlds whereon the floods of mercy stream.

More and more stars ! Here in our outward heaven,
More and more saints above !
But to the wistful gaze the sight is given,
The vision to much love—
Love taught of old to treasure and embalm
Whate'er in morning calm
Or evening soft steals from the gracious skies,
The dry ground freshening with the dews of Paradise.

More and more stars ! Behold yon hazy arch
Spanning the vault on high,
By planets traversed in majestic march,
Seeming to earth's dull eye
A breath of gleaming air ; but take thou wing
Of Faith, and upward spring :
Into a thousand stars the misty light
Will part, each star a world with its own day and night.

Not otherwise of yonder saintly host
Upon the glorious shore,
Deem thou ; He marks them all, not one is lost ;
By name He counts them o'er ;
Full many a soul, to man's dim praise unknown,
May on its glory throne
As brightly shine, and prove as strong in prayer,
As theirs whose separate beams shoot strongest through
this air.”

With the invocation to days and nights we return to the subject of light, which has been already touched on in an earlier division. ‘The darkness is no darkness with Thee,’ ‘Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment,’ says the Psalmist ; and we shall perceive the beauty and appropriateness of this metaphor when we remember that science shows light to hold a position in the world which belongs to nothing else which is merely physical. Whatever its effects on unorganised matter or on the plant-world, in its especial character of light it is the means by

which objects are made manifest ; obscure themselves, they yet reflect back light, and thus produce that effect on eye and brain which makes them acquire form and character. In other words, ' By the creation of light nature is visible to animal life.' Light, then, is ' the medium of communication between Creation and Reason.' ' And what pre-eminence in Creation does this one conclusion give to light ! It must be observed that nothing else in nature, however nearly related to light mechanically, whether in the subtle mechanism of the ether or otherwise—such as heat, electricity, magnetism, chemical action, etc.—however important a part any of them may play in the physical constitution and energies of the material universe, holds or can hold the same relation to intelligence of any kind that light holds. It is not without sufficient cause that Christian thought has always regarded the creation of light on the first day of the creation of the physical universe as symbolical, and a very representative of the revelation of that spiritual light by which man has the knowledge of God, which is in him life eternal.'¹

It is, then, with peculiar fitness that the Scriptures perpetually connect light with Divinity, while darkness is used to express the opposite of all godlike attributes, exile from His glorious presence : spiritual death, dismay, and affliction. Surely that darkness which might be felt must have been one of the most fearful of the plagues of Egypt ! And in the most awful hour of the world's history there was darkness—sudden, full of warning and suggestion—from

¹ *Does Science aid Faith?*—COTTERILL.

the sixth to the ninth hour, while the Light of the world hung dying on the cross, and the powers of darkness seemed to triumph. In the physical world, however, darkness is as necessary as light.

Light wears what it touches, and its withdrawal gives a time of repose, and in many cases, as with plants, a pause in which to build up what has been worn out in the day's work. All the time that light touched them, plants were assimilating materials to make leaves and seeds and roots; when darkness came, they reversed their processes, sent out carbonic acid gas instead of oxygen, got rid of useless matter, and repaired their delicate transparent cells. Much the same process goes on with animals. And although darkness and night have their terrors, they bring with them the great blessing of sleep. 'He giveth His beloved sleep' is the beautiful English version of the words of the Psalmist—a version which has suggested one of the most touching of Mrs. Barrett Browning's poems. Who can calculate what the value of sleep is to the busy, the sad, the sufferer? Who could endure life, were it not for the break of toil and pain and thought which sleep brings with it?

'O holy night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before;
Thou lay'st thy finger on the lips of care,
And they complain no more.'

With night a whole world of sounds and plants and animals awake, unknown to day. There are flowers which only blow when daylight wanes, such as the evening primrose and night-blowing cereus, and

nocturnal insects awake and seek them ; 'bats and owls begin to roam,' and in tropic regions the great army of beasts of prey are on the alert, while man is at rest. Night has, too, her own peculiar beauties : her sky 'inlaid with patins of bright gold,' her silent, peaceful landscapes. Southey must have deeply felt the charm of night, not only in his mountain region with its dark mountain masses and shining waters lying under the moonbeams, but in the far-off East, which his imagination pictured as vividly as if it were the scene actually before his eyes.

' How beautiful is night !
 A dewy freshness fills the silent air ;
 No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
 Breaks the serene of heaven ;
 In full-orbed glory yonder moon divine
 Rolls through the dark-blue depths.
 Beneath her steady ray
 The desert circle spreads
 Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
 How beautiful is night ! '

Summer and winter are but a longer day and night, giving life and energy to animated nature, or inforcing rest and storing up vitality. Scarcely more than a name in the Tropics, winter appears in its most terrible form in the Arctic regions, where mythology saw in it a host of mighty frost-giants, striving to slay the sun, while in temperate regions he is welcome, at least to the young and strong, who would exclaim with Cowper, did they nowadays read Cowper—

' O Winter ! ruler of the inverted year,
 I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
 And dreaded as thou art, '

though to the poor, and the sick, and the old he is a dreaded enemy. What he can be to the soldier we are told in two of Wordsworth's fine sonnets, in which he speaks of the destruction of the Grande Armée by 'mighty winter.' The battle between winter and summer as two opposing forces was commemorated in many ancient customs, perhaps hardly yet extinct. One lingered long at Nuremberg, where a mystery was acted by children, the characters of which were a king, perhaps originally the Sun, with his daughter Spring, and his serfs, Summer, Winter, and Death. In the *Edda* the names for summer and winter mean 'gladness of birds' and 'sorrow of birds,' and in very early times only these two seasons seem to have been acknowledged. The word *year*, however, meant originally spring, but gradually came to mean a twelvemonth.

That the seasons should remain unaltered, and that winter and summer should not cease, was God's promise to Noah after his sacrifice on coming forth from the ark—a promise without which, after such an experience as the Deluge, men would scarcely have trusted in that stability of natural laws on which, more or less consciously, all agricultural operations are founded. The seasons are regulated, not only by the distance of the earth from the sun, though that is found to be exactly what is required to secure the needful amount of light and heat which nature requires, but by the position of the earth with regard to the manner in which the sun's rays fall upon it. It is in reality further from the sun in summer than in winter, but it

then receives the rays more directly, and is therefore warmer, while at the same time the Antipodes, receiving them more obliquely, have their winter, although just then nearer to the sun than is our side of the world. Dr. Whewell, commenting on the effect of the seasons upon vegetable life, strikingly remarks : ‘ Most of our fruit-trees require the year to be of its present length. If the summer and the autumn were much shorter, the fruit could not ripen ; if these seasons were much longer, the trees would put forth a fresh suit of blossoms to be cut down by the winter. Or, if the year were twice its present length, a second crop of fruit would probably not be matured, for want, among other things, of an intermediate season of rest and consolidation, such as the winter is. Our forest trees, in like manner, appear to need all the seasons of our present year for their perfection : the spring, summer, and autumn for the development of their leaves and consequent formation of their proper juices, and of wood from this ; and the winter for the hardening and solidifying the substance thus formed.’

From light we naturally turn to fire, which the Three Children are represented as owning a servant of the Lord, and under His rule, as later did St. Polycarp, of whom tradition tells that when brought forth to die in the arena of Smyrna, the flames kindled to consume his aged body rose up in a great arch above him, and would not harm the venerable servant of Christ.

‘ God’s elements are merciful,
Man only mocks His will ;
The raging fire had spared the saint
The sword had power to kill.

Dim, dim before that innocent blood
Waxed the reproachful fire,
He dieth a costly sacrifice
On an unconsumèd pyre.'

There are few things, however, more ruthless, terrible, and searching than this element, and we may well shrink from the reminder, 'Our God is a consuming fire.' It has always been used at once as an emblem of spiritual life and spiritual destruction. The descent of the Lord of Life, the Paraclete, at Pentecost, was likened to fiery tongues ; but the doom of the wicked was also to be burned up with unquenchable fire, 'and at last the world itself shall be dissolved with fervent heat.' If we turn to the Old Testament, we think at once of the flaming sword which barred access to Paradise, and the burning bush in the desert of Sinai ; the pillar of fire which led the Chosen People ; the heaven-sent flame which consumed the sacrifice of Elijah, and wrapt the chariot in which he went up to heaven ; the burned sacrifices of the Temple ; and the ever-burning fire on the altar, first kindled from heaven, and kindled anew when the Temple of Solomon was dedicated. It is easy to understand that fire would be deified in early times, and worshipped in Egypt and Persia, Greece and Rome, in Peru and Mexico. The fabled wrath of the gods when Prometheus brought down fire from heaven and made it the servant of man, was but an emblematic manner of expressing what a sacred thing it was. The chark, or fire-churn, by which it was produced in India, was held a holy thing ; and we find that when the fire of Vesta went out at Rome, it was relighted by means of some similar

machine, usually made of thorn or daphne—a tree sacred to the Sun-god—combined with that of some parasite, such as ivy, which, when old, is tolerably hard. In some parts of Italy the peasants throw daphne or laurel into the fire during a thunderstorm, to avert danger. It would seem that in very early times the lamps kept burning in churches were lighted with fire obtained from rubbing dry wood.

Fire was especially revered by the Celts. The Hebrides were under the protection of a goddess called Brighid, patroness of wisdom, and song, and poetry, whose temples were served by noble maidens, called ‘Daughters of Fire,’ who answered to the Vestal Virgins at Rome. They fed the sacred flames with one kind of wood only, and were forbidden to breathe on them. In 1220 the Archbishop of Dublin ordered these pagan fires to be extinguished, but the islanders steadfastly refused to obey, and the fires appear to have been kept up as late as the reign of Henry VIII. Traces of a temple still remain. The name of Brighid has always been a great favourite in Ireland, but it is loved, not for the sake of the heathen goddess, but for that of St. Patrick’s pupil, Brietta, or Brida, whose little handbell was shown to devout visitors to Kildare until Henry V. forbade it, and after whom a palace, which later became a prison—Bridewell—was named.

We may be allowed to group lightnings with fire and heat, although the *Benedicite* very fitly associates them with the clouds where they are born, and whence too comes the heavy rain which aids to quench their fierce and sudden wrath, and which, too, carries down

the excess of electricity into the earth. The distance of a flash of lightning from any given spot can be calculated by measuring the interval between the flash and the mighty rumbling which follows it. When the two come in quick succession, the storm is above us. How often, even in our temperate clime, where the violence of tropical storms is unknown, has the anxious waker in the watches of the night listened with tightened heart to the pause between sight and sound ! There is always an awe attending the presence of a thunder-storm, particularly in the night, and we listen in suspense as it advances and recedes ; but a thunder-storm is a blessing in disguise, purifying the air, and cleansing many a street and alley where else sickness would reign.

Danger comes from forked lightning only ; the sheet lightning is as beautiful as harmless. Forked lightning is a thin, keen line, sometimes several miles long, while sheet lightning has no definite form, but is a mass of pale light, tinged with red or blue, or sometimes violet—now flashing over the sky, and now, hidden behind clouds, it only illuminates their outline. There is a third kind of lightning, called in German *Kugel-blitz*, a ball of fire launched from the clouds, and often running along the ground before it disappears. Both in shape and duration it is quite unlike the ordinary kind.

There are frequent allusions in the Bible both to thunder and lightning. To the pious Israelite the thunder ever typified the voice of the Almighty. Psalm xxix. is known as the ‘Psalm of the Seven

Thunders,' and no finer description of a storm was ever written. We quote the translation from the Golden Psalter :—

'The Psalmist calleth on the angels round the throne to bow down and worship Jehovah, when He shall reveal Himself in thunder and lightning to the world.

'Hark ! Jehovah is above the water ; the God of glory thundered,
Jehovah above the water-floods ;
Hark ! Jehovah is in power,
Hark ! Jehovah is in majesty.

Hark ! Jehovah : He breaketh the cedar-trees,
Now Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon,
And maketh them to skip like calves,
Lebanon also and Sirion like young buffaloes ;
Hark ! Jehovah, how He flasheth forth flames of fire !

Hark ! Jehovah shaketh the wilderness,
Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh ;
Hark ! Jehovah maketh the hinds to calve,
And strippeth the forests of their leaves,
While in His palace everything shouteth Glory !'

And how grandly are we taught in another passage that all the mysteries and powers of nature are in His hand : 'He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven ; to make the weight for the winds ; and He weigheth the waters by measure. When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder ; then did He see it, and declare it ; He prepared it, yea, and searched it out.'

Handel has attempted to give the effect of lightning in his well-known chorus 'Israel in Egypt,' and Painting has also tried to render it—but how vainly ! It is in its very nature evanescent, giving us an awful

and momentary glimpse of that great power of the Lord, electricity, made visible.

Wind, as it is caused by the action of heat, may be fitly taken here—that power which shapes the cloud-scenery of the sky ; a force viewless, mighty, tameless, purifying, and always regarded by both Jew and Christian as symbolic of God's presence, and of His Holy Spirit. Throughout the Old Testament it is thus looked on, and in His conversation with Nicodemus our Lord uses the Greek word in its double sense. Again, in the most striking use to which it is applied throughout the Scriptures, we find wind—a rushing mighty wind—used to describe that great and awful sound which suddenly at Pentecost filled the whole house where the apostles were sitting. This emblem is used in a somewhat different way in the vision of Daniel, where he saw that great sea which represents the world lashed into wild storm by the four winds of heaven, a metaphor intended to express tumult and confusion otherwise indescribable, perhaps suggested by the Chaldean account of the Flood, which he must certainly have known, where the four winds burst forth, and swept the earth until the floods reached to heaven. Probably the Chaldeans looked on the winds as real, living beings. In the British Museum there are two specimens in stone and one in bronze of the Demon of the South-west Wind. In the Revelation of St. John, where much of the imagery recalls that of Daniel, we find 'the four winds of heaven' restrained by angels, that they should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Poetry has had much to say about the winds. Milton, who calls them now 'the felon winds,' and then 'the whispering winds,' also describes them as reaching abroad from the four hinges of the world, and falling on the vast wilderness, and Shakespeare's invocation to the 'wintry wind' is almost proverbial. Shelley has an Ode to the West Wind, and Kingsley, somewhat perversely, praises the north-east, and (omitting other allusions far too numerous to quote) old Tusser quaintly celebrates all the winds thus—

'North winds send haile ; south winds bring raine,
East winds we bewaile ; west winds blow amaine ;
North-east is too cold ; south-east not too warme ;
North-west is too bold ; south-west does no harme.'

Art can only give the *effect* of wind, either on nature or in allegory, often apt to become prosaic, as in an old Dutch engraving, where four winds proceed from the lips of four cherubs, who are blowing furiously upon the Sea of Galilee, where floats the vessel of the disciples, with our Lord asleep. In Giotto's famous mosaic known as the 'Navicella,' the same subject is represented, but here the raging winds are personified as demons, and the allegory signifies the troubles and triumphs of the Church. Music has not only sung the wind, as in 'Blow, gentle gales,' and many other familiar instances, but she owes her very existence to air. But for air, sound itself could not exist. A tuning-fork struck in any place whence air has been withdrawn makes no sound. It is therefore with only partial accuracy that we speak of 'wind instruments,' as but for wind or air all musical instruments would be dumb.

CHAPTER V.

Earth and her Inhabitants.

Adaptation of the earth to man's needs—How formed—Constant waste and change—Heber—Ancient views of the earth—Mountains: often alluded to by Psalmist and prophet—Vaudois hymn—Mountains and green things of the earth—Water—Moss—Flowers in Palestine—Rogation Days—Hamerton on this festival—Few flowers named by our old poets—Grass—Corn—Dwellers in the waters—Whales—The fish a Christian emblem—Bread and fish used at love-feasts—Points in common between fish and birds—Flight of birds—Duke of Argyll on 'Contrivance'—Vultures, etc., forbidden as food to Jews—Reference to birds in the Bible, especially the dove—Mrs. Barbauld on the eagle—Shelley and Wordsworth on the lark—Drummond and Keats on the nightingale—Professor Owen on bird-song at dawn—Beasts and cattle—Unicorn or *rêe*—Wild animals of Palestine—'The Good Shepherd.'

'THE earth hath He given to the children of men,' says the Psalmist, and most wonderfully indeed has it been adapted for man's use. What the age of the world is the Bible does not tell us; the Scriptures do not concern themselves with the processes of creation; these are left for Science to discover. It seems probable that the earth was formed from nebulous matter, a process which appears in the present time to be going on in the planet Saturn. The first that we know of the early condition of the earth 'shows us a ball of matter, fluid with intense heat, spinning on its own axis,

and revolving round the sun' for an unknown period, muffled in hot vapour, which gradually cooled, while the contracting ground was cracked and upheaved into mountains or depressed into deep hollows by the fires within. What the thickness of earth may be which 'hides the fiery secrets of the interior has been variously estimated at from a few miles to six hundred, or even two thousand five hundred ; but the wide contrast in these estimates is itself enough to show how little reliance can be placed on any of them. Yet it must have taken incalculable ages for the glowing surface to have cooled sufficiently to make possible even the first of the great sedimentary deposits forming the lowest stratified rocks. Nor could the oldest water-formed beds now surviving be the earliest rocks that existed, for they must of course themselves have been the result of the slow wearing away of others still earlier.' The author of *The Supernatural in Nature* observes that the world is so ancient that the beginning, in which heaven and earth are created, is taken by St. John to prove the co-eternity of Christ with the Father. This wonderful globe is built out of but few materials, and these are as yet by no means combined into all the forms which they are capable of assuming. It is impossible to guess what will in course of ages be the outcome of these latent powers, or how this earth may waste and change, and be re-created. That constant waste and change are always going on we all can and must see. This is beautifully described in a passage of the book last quoted. 'The air is clear, and we listen in vain to catch a sound other than the low murmur

of waves breaking on the shore. The shepherd's flock slumbers beneath the elm-tree shadows, and cattle stand in cool hollows by the river-side. The green meadows, fresh and luxuriant, seem also asleep ; Nature is in repose. Is it indeed so? Come again, after a little time, and a change has been wrought. Even the flowers which bedeck the soil, the very substance of those hills standing firm, the deep sea, so placid, the quiet still air, are all in motion. From year to year the limestone of the rock changes its hard lineaments. The elastic sod pressed by our feet is not the same ; its materials are being altered, carried away, renewed. Changeable the wind, so the sea. All things are working, and for ever, in vast complications, every one child and parent of other. The contemplative mind beholds every day the passage of things invisible into sight, the transfer of the seen into the unseen. The passing away of the world might be called a pause, and the annihilation of solid spheres a rest, rather than the crash of destruction. We reverently lay all our science at the feet of the Eternal.' One day, we are told, our earth will circle round the sun a dead world like the moon ; but although 'none of the present forms of life could live in those changed conditions, we also know that descendants of the creatures now living may then be as well fitted to the existing circumstances as are the most favoured races of our time, so great and marvellous are the varieties of God's handiwork. Wander whithersoever we may, far as we can, long as we can, we shall yet find ourselves within the populous dominions of the Almighty.'

'I praised the earth, in beauty seen,
With garlands gay of various green ;
I praised the sea, whose ample field
Shone glorious as a silver shield ;
And earth and ocean seemed to say,
" Our beauties are but for a day."

I praised the sun, whose chariot rolled
On wheels of amber and of gold ;
I praised the moon, whose softer eye
Gleamed sweetly through the summer sky.
And sun and moon in answer said,
" Our days of light are numbered."

O God ! O Good beyond compare,
If thus Thy meaner works are fair,
If these Thy bounties gild the span
Of ruined earth and sinful man,
How glorious must the mansion be
Where Thy redeemed shall dwell with Thee !'

HEBER.

Beautiful, indeed, the world is, full of God's riches and mercy, but man has so spoiled and defaced it, and worked such woe and wickedness in it, that we turn with thankfulness to the promise that God will renew it, and give His redeemed a new earth wherein shall be no unclean thing, and of which it may be said in the fullest sense, 'All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.'

To the ancients the earth was a goddess-mother, Gœa or Tellus, a primeval, creative force, born out of Chaos, source of all life and fertility, yet the grave of mankind, into whose lap all things must return ; and thus she was not only goddess of marriage, but of death, and was invoked with the Manes. Rhea Cybele was her daughter by Uranus (the sky), and is another side

of Gœa. The Romans identified her with the Phrygian goddess known as the 'mighty mother,' whose wild and noisy worship had its home in the mountain land of Pessinus, where her image was borne in tumultuous processions in a chariot drawn by panthers, and surrounded by her attendant corybantes. She was represented as bearing towers on her head, with trees and animals around her. There is a statue of her in the Vatican, but her worship was not very popular at Rome, and no Roman was allowed to be her priest. The Germans had a goddess of the earth called Hertha, according to Tacitus, who, like Gœa, had a temple and a chariot, and who visited the world at stated times, which were celebrated with great rejoicings.

The grandest feature of the earth is her mountains. Their noble solitude and strength is constantly referred to by the writers of the Old Testament, although to them the greatest mountain chains were unknown. Among the hills of Palestine, Mount Lebanon—the 'White Mountain,' the Mont Blanc of Palestine—Mount Carmel, and Mount Hermon are the most remarkable, and consequently most often alluded to by Psalmist and prophet—Lebanon representing manly beauty and Carmel womanly grace. Again, Lebanon is used by Isaiah as a figure for the whole Jewish nation, for the Temple, and, in an especially bold and striking passage, for the king of Assyria and his army. Hermon, too, lifts its peaks so proudly that its snows are visible even from the deep Jordan valley as far south as the Dead Sea; and 'so long as these snowy tops were

seen, there was never wanting to the Hebrew poetry the image of unearthly grandeur which nothing but perpetual snow can give, especially as seen in the summer, when the firmament around it seems to be on fire.' These last words remind us how much to the Eastern is conveyed in the comparison of God's protecting presence to 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' There is something touching, too, in the pleasure which the Psalmist felt in thinking that the mountain fastnesses were not only a fortress for man, but that the high hills were a refuge for the goat, and the stony rock for the conies—for all the hunted and feeble creatures which God had made. And the mountains have also many a time been a place where God's people have found a shelter from persecution, such as is commemorated in the beautiful hymn of the Vaudois, which we owe to Mrs. Hemans :—

'For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
 Our God, our fathers' God !
 Thou hast made Thy children mighty
 By the touch of the mountain sod.
 Thou hast fixed our ark of refuge
 Where the spoiler's foot ne'er trod ;
 For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
 Our God, our fathers' God !

We are watchers of a beacon
 Whose light must never die ;
 We are guardians of an altar
 'Mid the silence of the sky ;
 The rocks yield founts of courage,
 Struck forth as by Thy rod.
 For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
 Our God, our fathers' God !

For the dark resounding caverns
Where Thy still, small voice is heard ;
For the strong pines of the forest
That by Thy breath are stirred ;
For the storms on whose free pinions
Thy Spirit walks abroad ;
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God !

The royal eagle darteth
On his quarry from the heights,
And the stag that knows no master
Seeks there his wild delights.
But we for *Thy* communion
Have sought the mountain sod.
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God !

For the shadow of Thy presence
Round our camp of rock outspread ;
For the stern defiles of battle,
Bearing records of our dead ;
For the snows and for the torrents ;
For the free heart's burial sod ;
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God !

Mountains are closely connected with the 'green things of the earth,' not only from their modifying temperature, and thus strongly influencing vegetation, but from their being the birthplace of rivers and of the little streams that 'run among the hills.' Vegetation springs up wherever there is water. In the desolate peninsula of Sinai, Dean Stanley tells us, are a few springs, 'which by the mere fact of their rarity assume an importance difficult to be understood in the moist scenery of the west and north. These springs, whose

sources are for the most part high up in the mountain clefts, occasionally send down into the wâdys rills of water, which, however scanty—however little deserving even of the name of brooks—yet become immediately the nucleus of whatever vegetation the desert produces. Often their course can be traced, not by visible water, but by a track of moss here, a fringe of rushes there, a solitary palm, a group of acacias, which at once denote that an unseen life is at work.’ And if water calls forth vegetation, vegetation, again, has a large share in the formation of springs. There is a Chinese proverb that the grandest rivers are cradled in the leaves of the pine. Standing in serried ranks on the hillsides, ‘they embrace the passing clouds in their arms, and condense them by their cold leaves into water, which descends to the ground in drops, and, percolating through the moss and grass into the shadowed earth,’ lays up stores of water to form the source of a spring.

Moss, too, is an extensive agent in collecting moisture on the mountains. Nearly all hills ‘have large spaces covered with dense carpets of moss. On these the snow appears early and lingers late, and during the rest of the year the clouds and mists are constantly distilling their moisture into them. They are therefore thoroughly charged with water, and give rise, wherever the ground forms a sloping hollow, to tiny rills, which drain the mossy sides of the hill, and nourish large quantities of moss along their course, and

then, in their turn, imbibe more moisture from the clouds and mists, and conserve the gathering water. It is interesting to think of the moss being thus the mediator between the weeping clouds and the arid earth'—so humble an agent, yet so important through the office which it fulfils, and one more of the innumerable proofs that God can and does work mighty things through instruments in themselves poor and mean. Poor and mean, however, are words that can hardly be applied to any of the 'green things of the earth'—whether the trees which the Lord hath planted, the lichen, so beautiful under the microscope, or the 'flowers of the field,' whose loveliness our Lord Himself delighted in. Palestine is a land of flowers still, even though no country has more cruelly proved the truth of the saying that 'no grass grows where a Turk sets his foot.' Still, as May comes round, the edges of the cornfields which cover the vast plain of Jezreel are 'woven like the High Priest's robe with the blue and purple and scarlet of innumerable flowers.' Still the white wild-roses bloom, and the fig-tree buds, and the willows grow by the water-courses, and the lilies and red anemones blossom in gorgeous beauty, with many other trees and plants far too numerous even to allude to. What that lily was to which the most magnificent of the monarchs of Palestine could not be compared, we do not exactly know, but an interesting passage may be quoted from Mr. Salt's *Voyage to Abyssinia* which bears on the question.

'At a few miles from Adowa,' he writes, 'we dis-

covered a new and beautiful species of amaryllis, which bore from ten to twelve spikes of bloom on each stem, as large as those of the belladonna, springing from one common receptacle. The general colour of the corolla was white, and every petal was marked with a single streak of bright purple down the middle. The flower was sweet-scented, and its smell, though much more powerful, resembled that of the lily of the valley. This superb plant excited the admiration of the whole party, and it brought immediately to my recollection the beautiful comparison used on a particular occasion by our Saviour' (St. Matt. vi. 28, 29).

On the other hand, Sir J. E. Smith pertinently observes: 'It is natural to suppose the Divine Teacher, according to His usual custom, called the attention of His hearers to some object at hand, and as the fields of the Levant are overrun with the *Amaryllis lutea*, whose golden liliaceous flowers in autumn afford one of the most brilliant and gorgeous objects in nature, the expression of Solomon in all his glory not being arrayed like one of these is peculiarly appropriate. I consider the feeling with which this was expressed as the highest honour ever done to the study of plants; and if my botanical conjecture be right, we learn a chronological fact respecting the season of the year when the Sermon on the Mount was delivered.'

The lily spoken of in the Song of Solomon was red—probably the scarlet martagon, *L. Chalcedonium*. The white lily is also plentiful in the Holy Land, and painting has consecrated this species, from its white

and golden beauty, to pictures of the Virgin Mary. Some five hundred years later arose a legend connecting the same flower, borne again by an angel, with the conversion of Clovis. Before the battle of Tolbiac, tradition declared a heavenly messenger bore these snowy blossoms to the king, who bade that ever after the lily should be planted in the royal garden. Endless, and often most poetic, are the flower legends, and the names which popular fancy or pious monks bestowed on them are frequently charming. We may instance the Welsh name for the Germander speedwell, whose heavenly azure has gained it the appellation of 'The eye of Christ.' There is no purer pleasure than that given by flowers. 'Man is naturally fond of a garden, and to a Christian it possesses a sacredness which throws a holiness over all its operations. In a garden the first man was born; there he tasted (and nowhere else) purely innocent joy; and in a garden, too, was undergone the agony of Him that restored that bliss; there also was buried the Restorer, and there He, in His own glorious Person, announced the resurrection of the dead.' Flowers are associated with both marriage and death. The frail blue flower and evergreen leaf of the periwinkle are strewn over dead infants in Italy, where its name is *Fior di morte*, and in Japan white water-lilies are borne in funeral processions; while in England our forefathers associated box and ivy; rosemary 'for remembrance betwixt us day and night,' and 'marigolds by deathbeds blowing' with burials.

Rogation Days were a time when the inhabitants of each parish implored a blessing on what the Litany so beautifully calls 'the kindly fruits of the earth' that we regret to find Archbishop Trench explaining it as 'fruits akin to the earth.' Instituted about the middle of the fifth century, they were observed in England down to the Reformation. On one of the three days, which fall just before the great festival of the Ascension, the boundaries of the parish were examined, the bishop of the diocese or the parish priest leading the parishioners, after a service of prayer. This was called 'processioning.' This custom must have existed in George Herbert's time, for he alludes to it in his 'Country Parson.' Milkwort has also the name of 'Rogation flower,' as it was carried at this time. This fact is one of the most clear to the rural peasantry in France, who set up their rustic altar on the village green, building a sort of chapel of green boughs over it, with candles on the altar, and vases borrowed from some cottages and filled with flowers—chiefly wild ones, for the genuine French peasant cares very little for floriculture. Mr. Hamerton, who has excellently described such a scene, adds: 'The poetic sense which exists in their uncultured minds has its exercise on these occasions in the building of the rustic altar, with its green bower for an apse, and its vases and candles and flowers. All is so closely connected with the beauty of the beautiful season that even the rude mind feels the harmony between the ceremony and the time. The year has given its first promise in the flowers; the

gentle air breathes warm, summer is coming fast, and after it the peasant looks to the wealth of autumn.'

It is rather a singular thing how few flowers our old poets celebrate. Many, which they certainly knew, they never deign to mention at all; and yet Chaucer, for one, loved them well. Bacon, in his well-known essay 'On Gardens,' enumerates many more than all the Elizabethan poets and those who went before them or came after, down to our own times, do. Peele even says, with a touch of disdain for the fair, fading things—

'We trample grass, and prize the flowers in May,
Yet grass is green when flowers do fade away.'

When speaking of the 'green things of the earth,' however, we assuredly must not omit to name with special honour that grass which the old poet celebrates—grass so common, so resting to the eye, so priceless,—corn, the staff of life, without which man cannot live, as Luther recollected when he passed through the harvest-fields round Leipzig. 'How it stands,' he exclaimed, 'that yellow grain, on its fair taper stems; its golden head bent, all rich and waving! The dumb earth at God's kind bidding has produced it once again—man's bread.' Well has it been asserted that the meanest scene is hallowed by the presence of a cornfield, for there has the miracle of multiplication of the loaves been worked anew. In the one case the processes of germination and development were suspended; in the other they extended over weeks and months. In the miracle there 'was a sudden putting forth of God's bountiful hand from behind the veil of His ordinary

providence ; the miracle of the harvest is the working of the same bountiful hand, only unseen, giving power to the tiny grains to drink the dew and imbibe the sunshine, and appropriate the nourishment of the soil during the long bright days of summer.' We understand the one miracle in the light of the other.

'Give us this day our daily bread' was one of the petitions first taught to the disciples, and though it means food for mind and heart and soul—all that the complex nature of man requires,—it emphatically means daily *bread*. Never since harvests first ripened have men been able to lay aside corn for a following year. It is asserted, and truly, that as we approach the time of harvest, we are but a month or two from starvation. Corn is God's especial gift to man. To him were given 'every herb bearing seed,' while to beast and fowl were allotted 'green herbs for meat.' Corn is never found in those geological periods preceding the appearance of man on the earth. It is never found wild. It does not seem to come from any cultivation of some wild species of grass. Unless sedulously cared for, it dies out, never propagating itself. No wonder that the Romans looked on it as a divine gift of that Ceres after whom all the grain-producing plants are called cereals, and called man 'the bread-eater.'

The sacredness of bread used to be, and perhaps still is, so strongly felt by the Portuguese, that they accounted it sacrilege to leave a bit lying where it might be trampled on. At the time of the Great Fire of London, a rumour was spread that it had been caused

by a servant of the Portuguese Ambassador throwing some combustible in at a window, an accusation which had no ground beyond the man's having picked up a bit of bread in the street, and laid it on a window-sill. Doubtless this extreme respect for bread may be traced to the belief which the Roman Church holds concerning transubstantiation; but every Christian will reverently remember that bread is connected with our highest mysteries, that one image by which the Lord Jesus described Himself was 'Living Bread,' and that His own emphatic words at the Last Supper as He broke bread were, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'

Before the earth was yet ready for beast and fowl, although the 'green things' were preparing it for their use, the waters were bidden to 'swarm with swarms of the breath of life;' 'and God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth'—those whales and other inhabitants of the waters which the *Benedicite* calls on to bless the Lord. Though it is very uncertain what the word rendered 'whales' in the first chapter of Genesis really means, it is evidently meant to personify and include all the dwellers in sea and river; and if really the whale, that great sea-monster may very fitly be taken as emblematic of all the rest. The Three Children could never have seen one; but if the *Benedicite* were indeed written by an Alexandrian Jew, he might either have known it by the description of the merchants, who came from all parts to the port created by the genius of Alexander, or possibly have seen it with his own eyes, since at one time the whale

was known in the Mediterranean. 'Leviathan' is probably the crocodile.

The fish is one of the earliest Christian emblems, partly, no doubt, because fish and fishing played so great a part in the lives of our Lord and His disciples, and appear in parable and miracle; and partly because the seven Greek letters which make the word for fish form the sacred anagram of the name of Christ. The symbol is constantly used by the early Christians, as not likely to attract attention, yet full of sacred meaning. St. Clement of Alexandria recommends the faithful to have it engraved on seals and rings, and it is found on ancient lamps and on tombs in the Catacombs. The cross was never openly used until the time of Constantine; but when once it could be worn and depicted, the fish was gradually disused. It should be observed that our Lord never used this emblem as His followers did, applying it to Himself; in His mouth it always typifies His members. When placed in early paintings in the hand of St. Peter, it alludes both to his trade and to his being a 'fisher of men.'

Bread and fish seem to have been always used at the first love-feasts. There is a representation of one with these viands on the walls of Domitilla's vault, near Rome; and ancient baptisteries were often decorated with paintings of fish, as an emblem of life through water. There is a font at Castle Frome, Herefordshire, where fishes surround our Lord as He receives baptism in the Jordan; and of course there is a mystical meaning in such pictures as that of St.

Anthony preaching to the fishes which appealed to the spectator of a simpler and perhaps devouter age, though now they raise a smile.

It may not at first sight appear obvious why, next to the 'whales, and all that move in the waters,' birds should be invoked; but in reality it is even scientifically appropriate. We have them classed together as created on the same day, and they have many points in common. There is a fish, as we all know, which uses its pectoral fins as wings; another builds a nest; another hatches its eggs, not indeed by incubation, but by carrying them in its mouth; and there are unmistakable likenesses of structure. The fish glides into the lizard; and in the great Pterodactyles, reptile bats, like flying dragons, we have a creature almost a bird; while the Plesiosaurus, another huge reptile, might almost be taken for a swan; and, again, a fossil bird found in A.D. 1872 in Kansas had teeth in both jaws, and was evidently both aquatic and carnivorous. No part of the creation is more beautiful than the 'fowls of the air,' the 'volatiles,' as Wyklif calls them appropriately enough, for their power of flight is one of the great wonders of nature. One of the things which Solomon said was beyond even his great understanding was 'the way of an eagle in the air.' Vainly has man as yet tried to attain this power, which at first sight appears to violate the law of gravitation. Birds are heavier than air, which again has a strong resisting power. How, then, do birds rise, and direct their flight with the

‘Scythe-like sweep of wings that dare
The eddying plunge through headlong gulfs of air’?

In his remarkable chapter on ‘Contrivance,’ in *The Reign of Law*, the Duke of Argyll observes that this resisting power of the atmosphere in a great measure counteracts the law of gravitation ; but to prevent its hindering advance, ‘the resisting power of the air must be called into action as strongly as possible in the direction opposite to the force of gravity, and as little as possible in any other. Consequently a body capable of flight must present its maximum of surface to the resistance of the air in the perpendicular direction, and its minimum of surface in the horizontal direction. Now, both these conditions are satisfied by the great breadth or length of surface presented to the air perpendicularly in a bird’s expanded wings, and by the narrow lines presented in its shape horizontally, when in the act of forward motion through the air.’ It is remarkable that the extinct birds of New Zealand, which did not fly, had no keel to the breast-bone. For flight, however, ‘another law must be appealed to, and that is, the immense elasticity of the air, and the reacting force it exerts against compression. . . . The wing of a flying animal . . . must be able to strike the air with such violence as to call forth a reaction equally violent, and in the opposite direction. This is the function assigned to the powerful muscles by which the wings of birds are flapped with such velocity and strength.’ Even birds which seem to move slowly, like the heron, flap their wings at the rate of at least two

hundred and forty strokes in a minute, if we count both the upward and downward stroke. A difficulty meets us here. If the upward stroke were as swift and strong as the downward one, there would be 'an equal rebound from the elasticity of the air.' Two contrivances meet this difficulty: the upper side of the wing is convex, while the lower is concave, so that the air is gathered up below and allowed to escape above; thus the upward stroke is much slighter in force than the downward: and then, again, the wing feathers are so set that in a downward stroke the air presses them together, while an upward one opens them, and lets the air pass. The wing feathers, moreover, are so made and set that they give the power of forward motion. No bird can fly backward. Every one who has lived by the sea must have noticed the great herring gulls, now floating on the wind, now veering round in long sweeps, now dropping downward, or poised for a moment and then floating on again, apparently without an effort, setting their beautiful wings to exactly the angle which each of these actions may demand. The least change of angle alters the movement. Grandest of all is it to see, as those who visit other oceans have seen, the albatross either poised, almost motionless, high in air, itself more radiant in the silvery lustre of its plumage than a summer cloud, or sweeping past upon unwearied wings, as if rejoicing when winds and waves lift up their voices, it may be some thousand miles from land.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we find three words used for bird—one standing for a bird of prey, from a root

meaning 'to rush upon;' another, from a root signifying 'to twitter;' and a third meaning 'a wing.'

All the tribe of vultures, eagles, etc., were forbidden as food; so were the heron, bittern, stork, and ibis among waders; the ostrich among running birds, and the pelican and cormorant among swimming birds. Many of the references to these birds are highly poetical: 'Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?' 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! so would I flee away, and be at rest'—words so touching that it is not wonderful they have inspired the lovely music in which Mendelssohn has enshrined them, or the well-known anthem of Kent. Again, how plaintively warning are the words of Jeremiah: 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord'!

The dove is repeatedly alluded to: 'Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?'—perhaps towers with latticed openings for the pigeons, such as may be seen in all the Eastern towns; 'like the wings of a dove, which have their feathers like gold'—a simile easy to be understood by those who have seen the pigeons fly suddenly up from a flat Eastern roof, with the sunlight suddenly striking on their plumage. The dove and raven are the first birds which appear in the pages of sacred history—the one content to hover over the subsiding flood, and feed on

carrion ; the other finding no rest for the sole of her foot, and returning to the ark, to be by and by sent forth again, and coming back with an olive leaf. As a matter of course, the dove was used in Christian art to symbolise the Holy Spirit, which, as the Gospel tells us, was seen at the time of our Lord's baptism 'in a bodily shape, like a dove.' But for this most sacred association, it is probable that the early Christians would not have used as an emblem a bird sacred to Venus, of whose impure worship the Jews knew only too much. Speaking of the Syrian Venus and her shrine at Ascalon, Stanley says : ' Her temple is destroyed, but the sacred doves—sacred by immemorial legends on the spot, and celebrated there even as late as Eusebius—still fill with their cooings the luxuriant gardens which grow in the sandy hollow within the ruined walls.'

The raven is not without some sacred associations. ' He feedeth the young ravens that cry unto Him,' says the Psalmist ; and it was the raven which God commanded to feed Elijah in exile and hiding. The glossy blackness of his beloved's locks is compared by Solomon to the plumage of a raven.

The eagle is a well-known emblem of St. John the Evangelist, who soars highest in contemplation of the Sun of Righteousness ; and as Isaac Williams observes, ' the mere natural motion of this bird, high on the wing as poised in mid-air, does of itself afford an emblem or picture of faith supporting itself under a sense of our Lord's divinity.' The eagle was an Assyrian emblem, and thus there is a peculiar appropriateness

in the image used by Habakkuk to describe the coming of the Chaldeans: 'They shall fly like the eagle that hasteth to eat.' From the Assyrians the eagle standard passed to the Persians, and from them probably to the Romans; and the prophecy of our Lord that wherever the carcass was, there would the eagles gather, has been explained to mean that where the Jews, soon to perish, were, the Roman eagles would appear to execute divine vengeance on the unfaithful people.

Mrs. Barbauld has given a description of the eagle in the lines—

'The royal bird his lonely kingdom forms
Amid the gathering clouds and sullen storms :
Through the wide waste of air he darts his flight,
And holds his sounding pinions poised for sight ;
With cruel eyes premeditates the war,
And marks his destined victim from afar.
Descending in a whirlwind to the ground,
His pinions like the rush of water sound ;
The fairest of the fold he bears away,
And to the nest compels the struggling prey.'

Birds and their songs have inspired many poets. We have Shelley's wonderful rhapsody to a sky-lark, Hogg's 'Bird of the Wilderness,' and—most beautiful of all—Wordsworth's. We cannot resist contrasting the lines of Shelley and the Lake poet, each a typical representative of a great school.

'Hail to thee, blithe spirit !
Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire ;
The blue depth thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sinking sun,
Or when clouds are bright'ning
Thou dost float and run
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.'

Thus Shelley ; and Wordsworth—

'Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Still with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings at rest, that music still !

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
A privacy of glorious light is thine ;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of melody and music more divine ;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam ;
True to the kindred ties of heaven and home !'

In a less lofty strain, but true to nature, is Chaucer's
allusion to the lark—

'The busy lark, the messenger of day,
Saluteth with her song the morrow grey,
And fiery Phœbus rises up so bright
That all the orient laugheth at the sight,
And with his beamès drieth in the graves
The crystal droppès hanging on the leaves.'

At the end of the sixteenth century we find another
poet, Sir John Davies, apostrophising the lark—

'Early, cheerful, mounting lark,
Light's gentle usher, morning's clerk,
In merry notes delighting ;
Still awhile thy song, and hark,
And learn my new inditing.
Bear up this hymn, to heaven it bear,
E'en up to heaven, and sing it there.'

And a little later we have the master poet with his 'Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,' which Cooke has set to music in a fine old glee and Schubert worthily rendered as a solo.

Still more beloved of poets is the nightingale, of whom perhaps Chaucer was thinking when he spoke of small fowls who make melody, and 'slepen allè night with open eye.' We will quote one early and one modern address to this bird, 'most musical, most melancholy.' The first invocation is by Drummond of Hawthornden, a Scotch poet of the seventeenth century :—

' Sweet bird, that sing'st away the early hours,
Of winters, past or coming, void of care ;
Well pleasèd with delights that present are,
Fair seasons, budding sprays, sweet-smelling flowers ;
To rocks, to springs, to rills from leafy bowers,
Thou thy Creator's goodness dost declare.
What soul can be so sick, which by thy songs
(Attuned in sweetness) sweetly is not driven
Quite to forget earth's turmoils, spites, and wrongs,
And lift a reverent eye and thought to heaven ?
Sweet artless songster, thou my mind dost raise
To airs of spheres, yes, and to angels' lays.

The second is from Keats :—

' Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this selfsame night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown.
Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.'

Whether or not the song of the nightingale be sad

has been ardently debated. Milton, we all know, held it as melancholy ; but Coleridge rejects the idea indignantly, and Wordsworth says—

‘ Happy, happy liver !
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to th’ Almighty Giver.’

After all, it matters little. Sad or joyful, the nightingale will always be the queen of songsters. Other birds in England sing late, as the wood-lark, and some of the reed warblers, but they are comparatively little known. It is in earliest morning that, as Professor Owen observes, the whole strength of the avian orchestra is heard. He who would enjoy it must rise before the sun, say in the month of May. On a fine day, at about 3.15 A.M., ‘ a few faint chirps and trills may be heard here and there, from newly-awakened sleepers in the nests. These gain gradually in strength and distinctness, and specific notes or motives can be recognised. Soon are added the luscious warbles of the larger songsters, and the nightingales, unwearied by nocturnal trills, join the morning concert. The varied songs come from all parts of the shrubbery ; the singers still remain near their sleeping perches and nesting mates. Not a sight is seen or flutter heard of an active bird ; no foreign sound, save, perhaps, the distant sough of an early train, jars upon the marvellous crescendo.

‘ In this concert the counter-tenor of the cuckoo and the monotones of the shriller cuckoo’s note chime in. To these are added the delicious soothing tenor

cooings of the turtle-doves, with the louder, clearer cries of the jays from the contiguous woods. The daws, rooks, and the carrion crows with their harsher caw contribute a bass. This glorious greeting of coming day continues as the light increases, till the sun rises in his splendour. He is ushered in with such a morning hymn as may give a new pleasure even to the angelic host.

‘By degrees one vocalist after another becomes silent ; the flutter of little wings succeeds the warbling of little throats. The unfeathered fledgelings have awakened, and opened wide their beaks for breakfast. Work comes after praise ; business succeeds to pleasure ; the garden is now alive with the flitting quests of parents after larvæ or other soft food. In the blaze of sunlight one returns : nothing of the morning concert remaining save the cuckoo’s cry and occasional caws from the rookery.’

In a private conversation Professor Owen added that it was especially in this morning concert that the ‘fowls of the air’ appeared to him to ‘bless the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.’ That they do so is a thought which Longfellow presents in his ‘Sermon of St. Francis :’—

‘Oh, doubly are ye bound to praise
The great Creator in your lays :
He giveth you your plumes of down,
Your crimson hoods, your cloaks of brown.
He giveth you your wings to fly,
And breathe a purer air on high,
And careth for you everywhere,
Who for yourselves so little care ’

—for whom, too, men care so little ; and yet not one sparrow perishes but God marks it !

In the appeal to all beasts and cattle to worship God, an old writer sees a separate invocation to the wild animals and the domestic. The animals named in the Old Testament belong chiefly to the Holy Land and Egypt, though a few foreign ones are mentioned, such as the apes and peacocks imported by King Solomon ; but it is not always easy to say what the Hebrew names really mean. The *rêm*—in our version unicorn—may be a wild ox, but again, it may be some large antelope. There are rude drawings still to be seen on the rocky walls of African caves representing an antelope, drawn in profile, so that only one horn is seen, and curiously like the fabled unicorn. Palestine ‘presents on a small scale an epitome of all regions—mountains and desert, northern and tropical ; maritime and inland ; pastoral, arable, and volcanic. In no other district . . . are the typical fauna of so many distinct regions and zones brought into such close juxtaposition. The bear of the snowy heights of Lebanon and the gazelle of the desert may be hunted within two days’ journey of each other ; sometimes even the ostrich approaches the southern borders of the land ; the wolf of the north and the leopard of the tropics howl within hearing of the same bivouac ; while the falcons, the linnets, and the buntings recall the familiar inhabitants of our English fields ; and the sparkling little sun-bird and the grackle of the glen introduce Bashan and Lebanon,’ while wolves,

jackals, and hyenas prowl around the villages and cemeteries.

The wild animals of Palestine are, however, far less numerous now than in the time of David. The bear has taken refuge in the ravines of Hermon and Lebanon, and the lion is extinct. The bones of lions have been found in the bed of the Jordan; and they must have been very common at one time, to judge by the constant allusion to this lordly animal in the Bible. It was the symbol of power, strength, and royalty—the symbol, too, on the banner of Judah; and yet, in its character of a lurking but mighty beast of prey, it was the type of the enemy of man. The prophet Nahum has a fine passage describing the lion: ‘Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.’ And Isaiah declares that the keepers of Israel shall no more fear the Assyrians than a lion ‘when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him,’ while the last mention of the lion in the Scriptures is the application of the name to the Lord Jesus Christ, as ‘the Lion of the tribe of Juda,’ by St. John in the fifth chapter of his Revelation.

The leopard is still found in Palestine. Its Arabic name, like the Hebrew, means ‘spotted.’ Several places in the Holy Land are still named after this animal,

such as Nimrim, now Nimeirah, where Dr. Tristram noted fresh traces of the leopard, showing that it was still to be found there. Beth-abara was at first called Beth-nimrah, and now that the ford is disused and the country is sparsely peopled, the leopards have again become numerous, and the spot is now Nahr-Nimram, 'the stream of the leopards,' whose footsteps leave their track on the mud, and may be noticed by the traveller, although the beasts themselves keep out of sight in the thickets. Leopards in all probability were among those wild beasts who owned the sinless presence of their Lord, and harmed Him not. As He was at His birth with the beasts of the stall, so He was after His baptism with the beasts of the wild, the Second Adam, resuming His dominion over the natural world which had shared in the fall of the first. The apocryphal gospels, whose *marvellous* is in general merely *monstrous*, and which so seldom portray the Divine Child with any traits which are really divine, are not here so remote from ideal and historic truth as is commonly their case. One of these tells of the Child Jesus, that in His flight to Egypt the lions and the leopards played harmlessly about Him, and escorted Him upon His way.

The dog, though often mentioned in Scripture, has never a good word given him. His Semitic name appears to come from a word meaning 'to lay hold with violence;' and although they were employed to keep the flocks, they seem to have been little more esteemed than those other members of their family,

foxes and jackals. 'Am I a dog's head?' asked Abner in his vehement indignation. The Jews do not seem to have been hunters, although their Assyrian neighbours on the north and the Egyptians on the south were devoted to the chase, and had splendid dogs for the purpose. It seems singular that a creature so susceptible of civilisation, and so important to a people owning great flocks, should have been so disdained. Breeding cattle and sheep was a very important occupation in Palestine, and on the ox devolved all the most important operations of farming. It was mentioned as one of the misfortunes of Job that while they were ploughing, his oxen were carried off by the Sabeans. They were used for sacrifice and for food, and to draw wagons and bear burdens; and kindness both to them and all animals was inculcated in the Mosaic precept that the ox should not be muzzled when he trod out the corn. The same merciful spirit appears in the command that a kid should not be seethed in its mother's milk, or the bird be captured on her nest. 'We little think it, but God shall call us to an account for the unkind and cruel usages of His poor mute creatures. He hath made us lords, not tyrants; owners, not tormentors. He that hath given us leave to kill for our use hath not given us leave to abuse them at our pleasure; they are our drudges, yet our fellows by creation.' Our Lord not only condescended to be called the Son of Man, but He vouchsafed to accept one of the brute creation as His emblem, and is known to us as 'the Lamb

of God which taketh away the sin of the world ;' 'As a Lamb that had been slain,' says St. John, a vision which even the gorgeous picture of Van Eyck can only materialise.

The sheep is the first animal mentioned in the Bible. Abel kept sheep, and dedicated them by offering the firstlings of his flock. The sacrifices of the Law were foreshown by the ram offered up instead of Isaac. Among all the titles of our blessed Lord is there any that goes home more to our hearts than that of 'The Good Shepherd,' or any parable so touching as that of the lost sheep? and who shall say how many mourners, weeping for little ones whose place is for ever empty, have been consoled by remembering that 'He taketh the lambs in His arms, and carrieth them in His bosom'?

CHAPTER VI.

Song of the Redeemed.

All men called to praise the Lord—Israel a name expressive of the Chosen People—Jews or Christians—The redeemed sing the song both of Moses and of the Lamb, ‘a song which none but the redeemed can sing’—Priests and servants of the Lord—Holy and humble men of heart—Spirits and souls—Manning on *The Faithful Departed*—Wheatley on prayer for the dead—Moses and Elijah—Milton on souls in bliss—The happiness of heaven—Wordsworth on ‘the depth of human souls’—All Souls’ Day—Old customs—Fitting conclusion of the *Benedicite* with an invocation to man—George Herbert—Longfellow—Dean Stanley on the *Benedicite*.

THE *Benedicite* has bidden ‘earth with her thousand voices’ to praise God with real if unconscious worship, and now calls on man to bring his tribute of adoration. First, all men are invoked, and then Israel separately. This name in Scripture always stands for the people of God. In the Old Testament it is applied to the Chosen People of the Jews ; in the New it expresses the Church, and we read in the Book of Revelation that the redeemed sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. ‘In the vision of the Church in heaven, granted for the encouragement of the Church on earth, the victors in the strife in which we are engaged are described as singing “the song of Moses, the

servant of God, and of the Lamb,” writes Bishop Magee, in his valuable sermons on *The Gospel and the Age*,—‘that is, they are described as keeping perpetual remembrance of the conflict they have endured. Their song is not of the future, but of the past. The host of the redeemed are pictured as looking back, like the host of Israel on the morning of their deliverance, over the troubled waters through which their long night march has led them, and mingling with their triumph over the utter destruction of their enemy the memories of that night of weakness and weariness and fear. They sing the song of “the servant of God,” the song of all good and faithful servants, no small portion of whose joy it will be to remember that good fight in which they were more than conquerors through Him that loved them. They sing “the song of the Lamb.” By the power of sympathy they enter into the joy of their Lord—that deep joy He knew when He, the true Moses, passed before His people through the depths of the grave and hell, and came forth leading captivity captive, destroying by His death him that had the power of death. The whole history of the Church’s pilgrimage here on earth—all the greatness and the mystery, all the weariness and the agony, all the patience and the faith of her long warfare, as well as all the glory of her last crowning victory, find their utterance in the song of Moses and the Lamb.’

‘ We came not in with broad
Full canvas swelling to a steady breeze,

With pennons flying fair, with coffers stored ;
For long against the wind, 'mid heavy seas,
With cordage strained and splintered masts we drave ;
And o'er our decks had dashed the bitter wave ;
And lightening oft our lading, life to save,
Our costly ventures to the deep were given.
Yea, some of us were caught, and homeward driven
Upon the storm-wind's wings ; and some, rock-riven,
Among the treacherous reefs at anchor flung,
Till the good ship brake under them, and clung
Still to some plank or fragment of its frame
Amid the roaring breakers.—Yet we came.

We came not in with proud,
Firm, martial footstep, in a measured tread,
Slow pacing to the crash of music loud ;
No gorgeous trophies went before, no crowd
Of captives followed us with drooping head,
No shining laurel sceptred us, nor crowned,
Nor with its leaf our glittering lances bound.
This looks not like a triumph, then they said.
With faces darkened in the battle flame,
With banners faded from their early pride,
Through wind, and sun, and showers of bleaching rain ;
Yet red in all our garments, doubly dyed
With many a wound upon us, many a stain,
We came with steps that faltered.—Yet we came.'¹

Next the priests and servants of the Lord are called on to raise the hymn of blessing—God's ministers, and the flock in which He has set them as overseers—all, in one sense, priests, and all His servants ; all bound to do His work, make the world more His kingdom, and be found watching when He comes, and then, uniting their imperfect labours with His perfect service, they may humbly dare to say, ' We have finished the work which Thou gavest us to do,' and

¹ Dora Greenwell.

hear the reply, 'Good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' 'Servants of God is the title of the saints in heaven. It is the title of the baptized on earth. It is the liturgical expression of the Church for all her members, whether she blesses them in Confirmation, or consecrates their marriage rite, or visits them in their sickness, or parts from them at the grave. To all whom God employs in His manifold ministries—angels or prophets, patriarchs like Abraham, kings like David—the title is given. Like all great words, it went through the process of becoming something conventional, customary, official. . . . But when St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter called themselves servants of God, they meant something more than this. They meant a devotion which filled up a lifetime.'¹

'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!' What a boundless promise! what a measureless reward! Is it not this which the Liturgy has in mind when it teaches the worshipper to say, 'Make Thy chosen people joyful'?

And now the *Benedicite* fitly calls on these servants—these 'holy and humble men of heart'—to praise the Lord as spirits and souls in Paradise—a very remarkable utterance for a Jew, if spoken so early as the time of David, for the Old Testament speaks very little of a future life, the needful lesson for the Chosen People then being to learn to think what God was, and would have His servants to be, not what should befall them.

¹ Dean Church.

selves. It was reserved for the Second Covenant to throw fuller light on the immortality of the soul and its destinies, though even now how little we know of the state of the departed! and how deep and vain is the longing for some word or sign from that unknown world where all of us have some dear ones! But even if they were permitted to commune with us, what could we understand of their state? Probably nothing. St. John in his First Epistle says, 'Beloved, now are we children of God, and it never yet was manifested what we shall be; but if it should be manifested, we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' This, says Dean Alford, is the more accurate rendering of the words—'meaning, if any one could come back or come down to us, and tell us what our future state is to be, the information could amount for us now only to this: that we shall be like Him, like Christ; because we shall see Him as He is: . . . like Him because, in order to see Him as He is, we *must* be like Him, or because the sight of Him as He is will change us into His perfect likeness.'

Sharp as the dividing-line appears between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, they yet are one. 'The unity of the saints on earth with the Church unseen is the closest bond of all. Hell hath no power over it; sin cannot blight it; schism cannot rend it; death itself can but knit it more strongly. Nothing is changed but the relation of sight. They are not severed, but only out of sight. The Communion of Saints is still one. Nothing is changed but the

visible relations of an earthly life; all the unseen relations of love and fond attachment still remain, nay, are knit more closely, for they that are yet watching have for them an intenser love, softened and purified by sorrow, and they that sleep are filled with the love of God.’¹ Manifold abuses which had crept in before the Reformation caused the English Church to ignore, though not to forbid, prayer for the dead. In the primitive Church, as Wheatley in his work on the Book of Common Prayer tells us, when there was no fear of any abuse of the practice, supplication was made for the dead as well as the living: ‘Not that they had any notion of the Romish purgatory, or so much as imagined that those whom they prayed for were racked and tormented with any temporary pain. They thought that the interval between death and the end of the world is a state of imperfection and imperfect bliss, in which the souls of the righteous wait for the completion and perfection of their happiness, and therefore they prayed that they might not only rest in peace for the present, but also attain a blessed and glorious resurrection.’

That the soul was immortal was not only the belief of Jew and Christian; it was a truth handed down from earliest days, and retained even by nations which lapsed into gross idolatry, such as the Egyptians and Greeks. Had there been no other assurance of this great fact in the Bible, the return of Moses and Elijah from the world of spirits to commune with our blessed Lord would have been enough to announce it. ‘How

¹ Manning on *The Faithful Departed*.

can it enter into the thoughts of man that the soul, which is capable of such immense perfections, and of receiving new improvements to all eternity, shall fall away into nothing, after having just looked abroad into the works of its Creator, and made a few discoveries of His infinite goodness, wisdom, and power? There is not a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion than this of the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it. To look upon the soul as going on from strength to strength ; to consider that she is to shine for ever with new accessions of glory, and brighten to an eternity ; that she will still be adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge, carries in it something wonderfully agreeable to that ambition which is natural to the mind of man. Nay, it must be a prospect pleasing to God Himself to see His creation ever beautifying in His eyes, and drawing nearer to Him by greater degrees of resemblance.'

Thus, with quaint piety, wrote Addison, rightly perceiving that greater things await the soul in bliss than even such an eternity of praise as Milton paints—

'That undisturbèd song of pure consent
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee ;
Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud, uplifted, angel-trumpets blow ;
And those just sp'rits that wear victorious palms
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly,'

or even than are implied in the lovely words of the Book of Wisdom: 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. They are in peace.' Much more is meant than mere safe-keeping. In this world 'we are absent from the Lord,' but we may safely assume 'that the moment a Christian's spirit is released from the body, it enters into the presence of our blessed Lord and Saviour in a way of which it knows nothing here, a way which, compared to all that its previous faith could know of Him, is like presence of friends compared to absence.'

Again, as the happiness of one person here on earth could never satisfy any other, each having his individual needs and capabilities to fill and use, so we may be sure that the bliss of heaven is at once one and individual—one, because there is the mighty bond of love and service offered to their common Lord. We know how work and love for anything binds together persons and characters most unlike and least sympathetic even here on earth, and this may in some degree enable us to comprehend how all souls can meet and live in perfect union. Sins and frailties will be washed away, and love and service for their God and Redeemer will fill and satisfy them. It is only by regarding what Wordsworth well calls 'the depth of human souls,'

'Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes,'

that we can realise 'how awful is the height of souls,' or that, as he says elsewhere, each soul is 'a separate heaven, a court for Deity.'

The intimate connection of 'All Souls' Day' with the doctrine of Purgatory has rendered it necessary for the reformed branches of the Church to omit this festival from her calendar. It is on All Saints' Day that we most think of our dead. But many—too many—feel with unutterable heartache that they scarcely dare to count their beloved who erred and strayed, and perhaps had no time to repent, among these. Where are they? To this there is but one answer: He who made and died for them must love and esteem their souls infinitely more than we can; He who gave us love assuredly can love far beyond us, His finite creatures; and to that love we must humbly leave them.

Traces of the superstitions connected with All Souls' Day, November 2d, still linger in England. In some western counties the village children go round 'soul-ing,' *i.e.* collecting small contributions, and singing—

'Soul, soul, for a soul cake !
Pray, good mistress, for a soul cake !
One for Peter, one for Paul,
Three for Them who made us all.'

The soul cake was a kind of bun, or, in Shropshire, very like the picture of shewbread in old Bibles. There is a kind of old rhyme which was current in that county: 'A soule cake, a soule cake; have mercy on all Christian soules for a soule cake.' Evidently whoever received one was bound to pray for some soul dear to the donor. The Cheshire verses are a strange mixture of devotion and petitions for cake and fruits. They begin—

‘God bless the master of this house,
And mistress also,
And all the little children
That round the table go,’

and end with the allusion to Peter, Paul, and the Trinity.

In very early times Christians used to commemorate the death-day of one dear to them by a feast, to which they invited their friends, the clergy, and especially the poor and needy; but by the fourth century these feasts had become so riotous and luxurious as to call forth a sharp rebuke from St. Augustine, and the custom gradually dropped out of use. We can never safely think of our dead except as being with Christ, and, seeking to realise their communion with Him, we shall be brought closer both to our Lord and those whom our sad human thoughts dwell on as our ‘lost’ ones. no

Were it not for the separate invocation to ‘servants of the Lord’ and ‘children of men,’ we might suppose that in a Jewish mouth ‘souls and spirits’ might mean the souls of those yet living, in the sense in which Mary exclaimed, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,’ but it is evident that another meaning must be given to this versicle, and that it is a testimony that the Jews at the time when it was written had a full belief that the souls of the departed existed in full consciousness, and enjoyed the power of worthily praising their God. The same conviction is borne in upon us by the

invocation to the Three Children, if, as seems almost certain, the hymn was composed long after their death. Thus, after calling on all the works of the Lord, animate and inanimate, to praise the Lord, the *Benedicite* very fittingly ends with man, of whom good George Herbert says—

‘Of all the creatures both in sea and land,
Only to man Thou hast made known Thy ways,
And put the pen alone into his hand,
And made him secretary of Thy praise. . . .
Man is the world’s high priest; he doth present
The sacrifice for all, while they¹ below
Unto the service mutter an assent,
Such as springs use that fall, and winds that blow.’

Yet while man justly claims to be ‘the world’s high priest,’ he should not forget the warning quaintly conveyed by a modern poet, who relates the mediæval legend of Bishop Benno, who, walking by ‘a marish bank,’ and reciting the *Benedicite*, was interrupted by the croaking of frogs.

‘Discontented, he could find,
Saying the Three Children’s Song,
As he passed the bank along,
No tranquillity of mind.’

He rebuked the frogs, and they were silent. The bishop continued his canticle—

‘All ye green things on the earth,
Bless the Lord who gave you birth,
And for ever magnify.
All ye fountains that are poured
From your sources, praise the Lord,
And for ever magnify.

¹ Beasts, birds, inanimate nature.

All ye seas and floods that roll,
Praise the Lord from pole to pole,
And for ever magnify.
All ye teeming things that dwell
In the waters, praise as well,
And for ever magnify.'

Suddenly he paused, struck by a pang of conscience—

'Fie upon me ! am I sure
My interest is half as pure,
Praises as acceptable,
As the strain, though loud and harsh,
Of these dwellers in the marsh ?
What am I that I can tell ?
Turning to the swamp, he cried :
"Sitters by the water-side,
Do not ye your hymns forego ;
I release you from the ban ;
Praise the God of frog and man—
Cantate, fratres, Domino.'"

We cannot more fitly conclude these thoughts than by the words of Dean Stanley, who, speaking of this noble canticle, calls it 'the sanctification of science ; the very crown and flower, apocryphal though it be, of the Old Testament ; the invocation of nature to bear witness against the idolatry of nature,' the acknowledgment that God has made us and all around us, and not we ourselves, and that *therefore* we may and ought to be joyful. 'O ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord : praise Him, and magnify Him for ever !'

Edinburgh University Press :

T. AND A. CONSTABLE, PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY.



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